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HISTORY

OF

FRENCH LITERATURE

HISTORY

OF

FRENCH LITERATURE

BY

HENRI VAN LAUN

III.

FROM THE END OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.
TILL THE END OF THE REIGN OF
LOUIS PHILIPPE

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BOOK VI.

THE FORERUNNERS OF THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

§ 1. The Transition Authors.

The reaction which, as we have already seen, overspread France after the death of Louis XIV., which altered the whole aspect of her literary and social annals, and which, after more than half a century of gradual intensification and accumulation of force, brought to birth the cataclysm of the Revolution, was of course not entirely due to the influences of the *Grand Monarque*, nor even to the absolutist principles of Richelieu and his successors. These, no doubt, had done much to aggravate the evils which afflicted France during the seventeenth century, and to stimulate the causes which brought about the social revolt of the eighteenth century. Louis and his ministers between them had ruined the country. They exhausted the sap of life by which alone a country can exist wholesomely, and develope healthfully; and the glory and grandeur of the Augustan age had virtually involved the misery and degradation of the age of Terror. An absolute king, a sumptuous court, and an extravagant administration had only one possible counterpart in an oppressed and exhausted populace; it was an inexorable law of history that this should be the case, but it was a law which the philosophy of history alone would reveal, and this philosophy

had not been mastered by those who were responsible for its violation. In England, experience had been more carefully read, and instinct led men to sounder and more prudent conclusions. Allowing for differences of circumstance and temperature, Charles the First and his sons might have wrought in England much the same evils that Louis XIV. and his great-grandson wrought in France, had not their career been sternly arrested by the phlegmatic independence of their subjects. Frenchmen were not so readily brought to the point of executing or banishing their monarchs ; they were long enduring and more easily suppressed ; but the leaven of rebellion was nevertheless at work. Long before the end of Louis XIV.'s reign his people were thoroughly weary of him ; the country, labouring under cruel taxation and ruthless despotism, had ceased to vaunt and extol the magnificence of the court to which the whole nation had been sacrificed ; and the revulsion had made itself more and more manifest, as we have had occasion to see, in the literature of the day. Not alone private memoirs, published generations after the death of the *Grand Monarque,* not alone the clandestine press, or pamphlets given to the world under the protection of foreign nations, but even, here and there, the avowed writings of Frenchmen, made public in Paris itself, had with greater or less directness conveyed a warning of the signs of the times.

The spirit which in the time of Louis XIV. was timidly and furtively expressed, assumed a clearer and bolder form under the Regency, and in the reign of Louis XV. The first note of extravagance and revolt was made perceptible in the domain of morals : religion, philosophy, literary style, were all to sink one by one under the influence of the new emancipation of heart and intellect before the political fabric was attacked. The moral corruption of society sprang directly from the artificial development of manners and taste which characterised the epoch whereof Louis XIV. was the central

figure; and here, as in every great national movement in which the spirit of a nation is mainly engaged, literature plays the part, not only of an historical exponent, but also of a director and of a cause. The morals of the Regency —even of the later court of Louis XIV.—were by their very dissoluteness a protest against the hollow formalism of court-etiquette, the coercive narrowness of the orthodox religion, the irresponsible tyranny of personal authority. It was the first rank growth of rebellion, the first rude assertion of liberty to think and to act, on the part of men who could not assimilate the conventional hypocrisy which was imposed upon them. The abbé de Chaulieu[1] is an apt instance of this moral recrudescence in its literary development. He caught the spirit of it, possibly enough, from Molière's friend Chapelle, and he became the Gaul *narquois* of Parisian society, even in the most polished epoch of the Augustan age, even in the most conventionally correct decades of the seventeenth century. Belonging to the school of Marot,[2] holding both the religion of others and his own philosophy lightly, attracted by the glare and glitter of sensuous enjoyment, he was yet an Epicurean rather by taste and coquetry than in act and practical devotion; not himself immoral so much as the cause and the apologist of the excess of others. His intimate friend, the marquis de la Fare,[3]

[1] 1639-1720.

[2] J. B. Rousseau apostrophises him thus :—

"Maître Vincent, ce grand faiseur de lettres,
Si bien que vous n'eût su prosaïser;
Maître Clément, ce grand faiseur de mètres,
Si doucement n'eût su poétiser;
Phébus adonc va se désabuser
De son amour pour la docte fontaine,
Et connoîtra que pour bons vers puiser
Vin champenois vaut mieux qu'eau d'Hippocrène."

Maître Vincent is Voiture: Maître Clément is Clément Marot.—*Œuvres de J. B. Rousseau.* Paris, 1820, vol. ii. p. 263.

[3] 1644-1712.

author of a meritorious volume of *Memoirs*, which show that he had the instinct of a genuine historian, unresistingly passed the boundary line which Chaulieu had marked out, and did not hesitate to vaunt himself "*de grege Epicuri.*" The abbé condemned and lamented the extravagance of the marquis; but in principle and in spirit they were worshippers at the same shrine. Both contrived to escape public scandal —more fortunate in this respect than Bussy-Rabutin and Saint-Evremond. They lived and died in Paris, if not in the odour of conventional propriety, at least without the open stigma of revolt against the accepted social code; but they were none the less pioneers of freedom in thought and literary expression.

Of these pioneers of the new age Jean-Baptiste Rousseau[1] was another, with still better claim to our attention than Chaulieu and La Fare. His name, if not his individuality, connects the epoch of Louis XIV. with the epoch of the Revolution; for Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the author of *Emile* and the *Contrat Social*, who displayed the spirit of his namesake in another form, was one of the principal apostles, though not absolutely a participator, of the great popular upheaval which brought the last century to a close. Jean-Baptiste Rousseau was a poet, with the gifts of harmony and satire, a lyric poet in an essentially prosaic age, without much genius or originality, or even feeling, but with an instinct which made his verses eminently suggestive, and a shrewdness of perception which gave his satire considerable effect. Reckless both in his life and in his writings, and destitute of the prudence which enabled many another roysterer of his time to steer clear of public scandal, he too easily fell a victim to the enemies whom his bitter epigrams had made for him. One of these was La Motte, who had conceived the notable idea of compressing *The Iliad* into twelve books; although his knowledge

[1] 1670-1741.

of Greek was at most not greater than that of Pope. Rousseau covered the abortive work with ridicule,[1] and La Motte never forgave him. After the bad success of Rousseau's play *The Capricious Man*, several bitter couplets were circulated against the literary habitués of a certain coffee-house kept by the widow Laurent. These attacks, gradually increasing in venom, were often repeated, and, after the election of La Motte to the vacant seat of Boileau at the Academy, reached such a climax that Rousseau, who was accused of having written them, received a public castigation. The poet disclaimed them; but in vain. He had written plenty of others quite as bad; but it was the spurious ones for which he was destined to suffer. His supposed discovery of the real author of the couplets in the Swiss Saurin, pressed with too much indiscretion, completely discomfited him in the eyes of the Parisian public, whilst he was condemned by a court of justice to pay four thousand francs damages. He fled from France, refused several times to return, unless his innocence were recognised, and died, thirty years later, in exile at Brussels.[2]

Whatever may be thought of the morality of Jean-

[1] "Le traducteur qui rima l'Iliade
De douze chants prétendit l'abréger;
Mais par son style aussi triste que fade
De douze en sus il a su l'allonger.
Or le lecteur, qui se sent affliger,
Le donne au diable; et dit, perdant haleine:
'Eh, finissez, rimeurs à la douzaine!
Vos abrégés sont longs au dernier point.'
Ami lecteur, vous voilà bien en peine,
Rendons-les courts en ne les lisant point.'

[2] Piron wrote the following epitaph on him:—
"Ci-gît l' illustre et malheureux Rousseau:
La Brabant fut sa tombe et Paris son berceau.
Voici l'abrégé de sa vie,
Qui fut trop longue de moitié:
Il fut trente ans digne d'envie,
Et trente ans digne de pitié."

Baptiste Rousseau, and in spite of his failure as a dramatist, the poet's taste, in the art of versification particularly, is not to be disputed. Human sympathy, on the other hand, has a good deal to do with the development of the poetic faculty ; and of this Rousseau had but little. The consequence is, that whilst he was a harmonious and even a polished poet, inclining by preference to moral subjects, writing sacred odes and songs, crowded with the maxims of a dignified moral philosophy, he composed also obscene epigrams and filthy verses, to please the grand prior de Vendôme, and the literary libertines who met at the Temple, and acted the part of Petronius Arbiter at the same time that he was imitating the Psalms of King David at court. His countrymen have fought over his merits, alternately extolling and depreciating them ; but his praises have apparently been most frequently sung by critics to whom another and a greater Rousseau was obnoxious, whilst others, and perhaps the majority of literary judges, following the example of Voltaire, have failed to see in Jean-Baptiste Rousseau anything more worthy of esteem than a melodious versifier, dealing for the most part in the commonplaces of humanity.

A couple of poetasters who are wont to be bracketed together for much the same reasons which cause the association of Chaulieu and La Fare—their personal friendship, and the similarity of their spirit and tendency—illustrate yet more clearly the period of transition from Louis XIV. to the Revolution. Preserving much of the mannerism, the narrowness, the timidity of the later Augustan age, Fontenelle[1] and La Motte[2] have also much of the instinct for liberty which, in the eighteenth century, betrayed its presence under so many different forms of development. If their traditions and powers were all of the past, their ideas and aspirations belonged, in great measure, to the future ; and it was courage,

[1] 1657-1757. [2] 1672-1731.

not disposition, which retarded their advance. The like thing is true of Chaulieu and La Fare, and of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, though in a less degree; they dared not embrace the future which tempted them to turn their backs upon the past; it was a natural shrinking which affected the whole generation, until Voltaire had shown them the example of his courage.

We have seen what Rousseau thought of La Motte; he was no more tender towards Fontenelle. In one of his epigrams he says—

> "A Norman shepherd for these thirty years
> To men of wit would an example be;
> He shows them how, with fashionable air,
> To treat great subjects, in familiar style.
> Nor is this all; for 'mongst the womankind
> He still can shine despite his grizzled beard;
> No gossip lives in any decent house
> Who's not in raptures with his eloquence.
> And, truth to say, these dames are in the right,
> For he's the daintiest pedant in the world."[1]

Poor Fontenelle was the butt of all the clever men in Paris during the first half-century of his life. "Whether he speaks or writes," says La Bruyère,[2] describing him under the name of Cydias,[3] "he ought not to be suspected of having an eye either to the true, or the false, or the reasonable, or the

[1] "Depuis trente ans un vieux berger normand,
Aux beaux esprits s'est donné pour modèle;
Il leur enseigne à traiter galamment
Les grand sujets en style de ruelle.
Ce n'est le tout: chez l'espèce femelle,
Il brille encor, malgré son poil grison;
Et n'est caillette en honnête maison
Qui ne se pâme à sa douce faconde.
En vérité, caillettes ont raison,
C'est le pédant le plus joli du monde."

See vol. ii. bk. v. ch. 4. § 2. [3] *Caractères de la Société et de la Conversation.*

ridiculous; he avoids both acting on other people's judgment and being of other people's opinion; thus, in company, he waits for each one to explain his views of the subject in hand, or the subject which he has himself brought forward, in order to say something entirely new, in a dogmatic style, but, as he thinks, decisive, and incapable of reply. Cydias matches himself with Lucian and Seneca, sets himself above Plato, Virgil, and Theocritus; and his flatterer (La Motte) takes care to strengthen him every morning in this opinion. United by taste and interest with the despisers of Homer, he waits calmly until the undeceived world shall prefer other poets to him; he sets himself in this respect above other poets, and knows to whom he assigns the second place. He is, in a word, a compound of the pedant and the *précieux*, made to be admired by the cits and the provincials; in whom, nevertheless, one perceives nothing great except the opinion which he has of himself." It is one of the clearest, the bitterest, and the most damning of literary portraits, which it would be impossible for the fame of Fontenelle to survive. Yet the man himself survived it some fifty years, and became a force and an authority in the intellectual life of his day. His uncles, Pierre and Thomas Corneille, encouraged him to write plays; and he wrote two, *Aspar* and *Idalie*, which covered him with ridicule. Racine, more merciful than the uncles, laughed at Fontenelle's attempts; and the latter had little more success with his *Dialogues of the Dead*, and his *Letters of the Chevalier d'Her. . . .* He took next to popularising science, and wrote a volume of *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, and a *History of Oracles*, wherein he managed to catch the ear of the public. Popular science was thenceforth his rôle; and during the remainder of his life, as a member both of the Academy and of the Academy of Sciences, he enjoyed that species of cheap popularity amongst the minor savants and dilettanti of society which, even in the present day, marks

the highest point of ambition amongst many men of uncertain inspiration, superficial knowledge, and feeble mental grasp. In the *Memoirs* of Madame de Staal,[1] we meet more than once with Fontenelle and La Motte, and the rest of the circle of wits who, at the house of the duchess de Maine, at Sceaux, a less brilliant Hôtel de Rambouillet, used to hold themselves aloof from the dissolute court of the Regent.

From Sceaux, or from the drawing-room of the marchioness de Lambert in Paris, Fontenelle would accompany or go in search of his friend La Motte to the Academy, where, after the death of Boileau, and the exile of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, they reigned supreme. The latter of the two inseparables had written a play, *Inez de Castro*, which was sufficiently good upon the stage to reap a popularity lasting him his lifetime; so that both men rejoiced in their old age in a literary reputation which had been denied to them in their youth.

The stage of the regency had more than the plays of Fontenelle and La Motte to relieve the loftier comedies of Molière and the tragedies of Corneille and Racine. Dancourt[2] had left farces of considerable freshness and piquancy, dealing chiefly with the whimsicalities of peasants and cits; Regnard's[3] gay comedies kept their hold upon public favour; Destouches,[4] who had been secretary of the French embassy in London, reached a still higher level in his comedies of character, in which, for that age at least, he attained a place second only to Molière. The *Boaster* (*le Glorieux*), the *Philosopher Married*, and the *Spendthrift*, display real genius,—not indeed the genius of a powerful comedian, but that of a playwright always ready and able to please, and not seldom rising to the dignity of creative force. In the following apology for avarice, from the last-named play, there is something more than badinage, something stronger than the mere play of words, which, since

[1] 1684-1750. [2] 1661-1725. [3] 1665-1709. [4] 1680-1754.

Molière had taught the trick, it had been comparatively easy to simulate:—

"The more one's Avarice, the less one's vices:
The care of hoarding wholly fills the heart,
Who lives for this in this his pleasure finds.
Beg of a friend, he doubts, or says you Nay;
Money's a friend for ever prompt and true.
To hoard's a pleasure well worth all the rest.
If known, we can our every wish command,
And have the means, our soul is satisfied. . . .
All that I see I have the power to buy,
And that's enough. I like that handsome house. . . .
'Nought hinders but I get a better still,'
I see a charming woman—Well, I say:
'My wealth could buy her,'—and I rest content.
In short, all that the world most precious has
My coffers hold; I have it 'neath my eyes,
And 'neath my hand; thus avarice which they blame
Is to the senses joy, and charms the soul."[1]

The leading dramatist in the tragic vein, during the generation which succeeded the death of Racine, who like his greater predecessors clung to the classical models for his in-

[1] "Plus on aime l'argent et moins on a de vices:
Le soin d'en amasser occupe tout le coeur,
Et quiconque s'y livre y trouve son bonheur.
Un ami qu'on implore ou refuse ou chancelle;
L'argent est un ami toujours prompt et fidèle.
Le plaisir d'entasser vaut seul tous les plaisirs.
Dès qu'on sait que l'on peut remplir tous ses désirs,
Qu'on en a les moyens, notre âme est satisfaite. . . .
De tout ce que je vois je puis faire l'emplette,
Et cela me suffit. J'admire un beau château. . . .
'Il ne tiendrait qu'à moi d'en avoir un plus beau;'
Me dis-je. J'aperçois une femme charmante:
'Je l'aurai si je veux,' et cela me contente.
Enfin ce que le monde a de plus précieux
Mon coffre les renferme, et je l'ai sous mes yeux,
Sous ma main; et par-là, l'avarice qu'on blâme,
Est le plaisir des sens et le charme de l'âme."

spiration, was Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon,[1] author of *Electra, Xerxes, Idomeneus, Atreus and Thyestes,* and one or two other plays. Over the well-worn subjects of Greek mythology he cast the shadow and the glare of a morbidly tragic mind, which pursued and gibbeted sin with the zeal of a fury, and burned its impressions upon the hearts of the spectators by the sheer force of the horror which his pictures inspired. Therein, no doubt, was art and genius, if not of a very refined order. And in fact Crébillon was not refined. He had made the fastidious Boileau shudder at his earlier efforts; the roughness of his work makes them read almost like burlesque. Better than most of his dramas is *Rhadamistus and Zenobia,* which might entitle him to be the Ford of the French stage, provided we deny him just that superiority of style which is generally to be accorded to the Frenchman over the Englishman in comparing two authors of similar spirit and tendency.

Le Sage,[2] best known out of France as the author of *Gil Blas* and *The Devil on two Sticks* (*Le Diable boiteux*), was a satirical dramatist of no mean power; and, as a matter of fact, the success of his second comedy, *Turcaret* (1709), was too great to allow him to prosecute it farther in the same direction. This play was aimed against the financiers, who, towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV., wished to make money at any price, and whom Le Sage had studied when he was clerk to one of them. They certainly afforded ample material for satire, and Le Sage ridiculed them to some purpose, and with greater bitterness than he generally uses. They had sufficient influence and spite to make the dramatist perceive that the weapon which he had employed was too effective for his own peace of mind; and he cast it aside for that which he had already made use of in *The Devil on two Sticks.* The veteran Boileau had been no more tender towards this manifestation

[1] 1674-1762. [2] 1668-1747.

of the sterner spirit of the new age than he had been towards the vigorous *debut* of Crébillon ; and his unfavourable criticism may explain why Le Sage attempted a different *genre* from that which had earned him his first great success. He now, however, returned to fiction, and produced his masterpiece in *Gil Blas de Santillane*, a vivid picture of manners, an apotheosis of the indifferent worldling, to whom neither virtue nor trickery is in itself commendable or the contrary, but to whom the pursuit of happiness, and success in that pursuit, constitute the aim and end of existence. The book, it has been shrewdly said, is as moral as experience ; it is also as useful and as entertaining ; and this very fidelity to experience is a cause why it has never lost its popularity. There is an art of purely describing what is not pure ; and Le Sage possessed this art in the highest degree. He is moreover fresh and simple in style ; his charm is not easily described, but it is the charm of all great and simple writers, and of French writers in particular. He touches the evils of his time lightly, but always on the weak spot ; he glances past the graver questions of the day, but wherever his glance rests, there it illumines, suggests, and convicts. The style of Le Sage in *Gil Blas* is pre-eminently French ; in this respect he surpasses all the writers of the eighteenth century, not excluding Voltaire. Charles Nodier,[1] one of the most charming of modern French tale-tellers, was wont to say that he defied anybody, whether man of letters or philologist, to find in the French language an idiom, a familiar turn, a locution, which had not been used in *Gil Blas*. This may have been in the time of Charles Nodier, but forty years of literary fermentation have added much to the French tongue. Le Sage, could he come to life, would hardly recognise his mode of expression in the florid and coloured style of the Romantic School. The language

[1] 1780-1844.

has enriched itself, the fields open to literary genius have become wider, the scope of thought freer, and the modern expression has proportionately added to its former wealth. Nevertheless, one always returns to *Gil Blas* as to one of those literary works which constitute the canons of the French language. The selection of the subject exposed Le Sage to repeated charges of plagiarism; and Voltaire, because the author of *Turcaret* had shrewdly, though good-humouredly, satirised him,[1] was weak enough—it may almost be said dishonest enough—to corroborate these ridiculous accusations, whereof the origin is traced to a Spanish Jesuit named Juan d'Isla, who could only bring the most absurd arguments in support of his plea. The truth is that, spite of its Spanish clothing, no more unfortunate selection than *Gil Blas* could have been made for

[1] The satire in question is contained in the following description of a dramatic performance recounted by Gil Blas, in the fifth chapter of the tenth book of Le Sage's great work: "I found the house full from floor to ceiling, a closely packed pit, and the stage covered with knights of the three military orders. 'Here is a numerous gathering,' said I to Don Alphonso. 'No wonder,' answered he, 'the tragedy they are going to play is written by Don Gabriel Triaquero (Voltaire), nicknamed the Fashionable Poet. Whenever the playbills announce a new play by this author, the whole town of Valencia is topsy-turvy. Men, and women also, speak of nothing else; all the boxes are engaged in advance, and on the first night people crush themselves to death to get in, although the price of all the seats is doubled, with the exception of the pit, which is too-much feared for the manager to put it out of humour.' 'What frenzy!' said I to the governor; 'this extraordinary display of curiosity, this frantic impatience to hear all that Don Gabriel produces afresh, gives me a high idea of the genius of this poet.' 'Do not judge so fast,' answered Don Alphonso; one must guard against prejudice, the public is often dazzled by pieces of seeming brilliancy, and only appreciates them after they have been printed.' At this stage of our conversation the actors appeared. We immediately ceased talking, in order to listen to them with more attention. Applause began at the very first words; each verse was followed by a clamour of approbation, and each act by such a clapping of hands as to make believe that the house would crumble down. After the performance the author was pointed out to me; he passed from box to box, modestly offering his head to the crowns which the noblemen and the ladies were preparing to place thereon." In this manner Le Sage continues to criticise and satirise Voltaire, and finishes by saying that "two-thirds of his verses are bad, his types awkwardly described and ill sustained, and his thoughts often very obscure."

the purpose of proving a flagrant plagiarism, for no work can be, in spirit and philosophy, less Spanish and more French.

Gil Blas, masterpiece as it is, has given occasion for a sweeping remark on the nature of the author's genius, which, unduly explained, may appear unjustly applied : it is, that Le Sage was an author of one book. This judgment, we think, may be accepted, with small restrictions, in the best meaning of the term. *The Devil on two Sticks* is a work as full of that quiet biting irony and witty epicureanism which forms the chief characteristic of Le Sage's talent, as of observation and literary skill ; but, let us say so without fear of desecrating the glory of its author, it contained, condensed, and in a less varied and attractive form, all the fundamental maxims of philosophy, the sharp insight into the weaknesses of human nature, the brief and brilliant review of human life, which reappeared in the pages of *Gil Blas.* Le Sage, unlike many men of genius, had condensed all his qualities in one work : that work he wrote over again, but he distilled the essence of his former production, and rendered it more accessible to all minds by displaying further gifts of imagination. In this sense Le Sage was undoubtedly a man of one work ; but there are men of many who would willingly exchange their titles of celebrity for those contained in that one marvellous book, destined to live as long as the language it was written in. Gil Blas tells his own history, relates his illusions, his struggles, his failures and successes, with unimpaired cheerfulness and good-humoured philosophy. He dilates and reflects on all that he sees, and on the whole exercises his wit far less on his own history than on the acts of the society in which he lives. All that he relates is simple and drawn from the life ; still there is hardly a minor feature of the picture which does not aim both at satirising and finding excuses for the foibles of mankind. Gil Blas spares nothing and nobody, not even himself, his own shortcomings are exposed with spark-

ling *esprit* and vengeful frankness. He gives himself also credit, as he does to others too, for the movements of his better nature. He is a true type of men; kindly disposed, and good in essence, he is withal weak in the flesh; his virtue is not sufficiently rigid to preserve him from the temptations of evil,—he knows that he is doing wrong, says it, and repents afterwards; but nevertheless he does wrong. By nature he thinks discretion is the better part of valour; and yet we see him showing both moral and physical courage on fitting occasions. He laughs at the vanity of others; and yet he is himself supercilious, and his conceit leads him into ridiculous predicaments. He is kind, but he forgets his father and mother, who are languishing in poverty whilst he is thriving in opulence. Yet, on the whole, Gil Blas gives us the idea of an honest and good man: how is this? He has been something of a robber, he has had a hand in swindling tradesmen, and when prosperous he has not always discharged the most honourable functions; he has shown himself oblivious and ungrateful; he has "cut" his humble friend when he was secretary to a prime minister; in fact he has been the reverse of rigidly virtuous. In spite of ourselves, the impression grows upon us as we turn the pages of Gil Blas's history; and it is because we see his better instincts always overcoming his weaknesses; because the world offers him so many temptations that he seems virtuous in eventually discarding them. As Hamlet is the incarnation of human hesitation, Gil Blas is the portrait of plodding humanity; he loses no time, and expends no happiness, upon meditation on the future existence of man; he considers that earthly affairs are quite enough for him to cope with; and, to alter slightly Figaro's saying, he prefers to laugh at human weaknesses rather than to weep over them.

Gil Blas is the son of domestics; they are good people, but poor. They can hardly provide for their child, who would

fare ill in the world if his uncle, an old canon, did not provide for him. Under this good man's auspices the young Blas learns a good deal of Latin and some Greek. When he is seventeen the old canon gives him a few pieces of money, and a sorry mule, and lets him loose upon the world to seek his fortune. As to Gil Blas's parents, he says, they make him a present of their blessing, but no more. From the very first the candid young fellow falls into petty scrapes and misfortunes; the most serious is when he is in the hands of highwaymen, in their own sphere good fellows enough, and who kill people in order to live. Until he can escape Gil Blas is compelled to join them, and acquits himself of the duties of his new profession to the admiration of his companions. One day, however, he runs away with a lady captured by the robbers, and is rewarded for this good action by being thrust into prison. Thus, the first result of Gil Blas's experience is to show him that to do wrong without being found out is more advantageous than to act well when appearances are against one. After a series of adventures, in which he generally acts the part of dupe, and pending the time when he will attempt to dupe others, Gil Blas meets a school friend at Valladolid, one Fabrice, son of an Oviedo barber, who had eloped with a young lady of good family. This lady, later on, chose to continue her travels with another male companion; and Fabrice was there and then a footman out of necessity. Gil Blas easily allows himself to be prevailed upon to adopt his friend's profession. After trying one or two masters, he finds one after his taste in the famous doctor Sangrado, whose extensive practice is sufficiently proved by the number of patients who die under his auspices. Sangrado takes a liking to his young servant, tells him that the art of healing consists in bleeding and prescribing hot water, and, finally, raises him to the rank of junior partner. Señor Gil Blas is now a learned practitioner. He

bleeds with such enthusiasm that the streets of the unhappy town of Valladolid are filled with funerals. The young doctor is frightened out of his new avocations, flees from Valladolid, becomes again a servant, makes some money, falls in with the sharpers who had previously robbed him of his purse, associates with them; then encounters a young nobleman, who takes a fancy to him, and provides for his future happiness. But Gil Blas has not squared his accounts with Fortune, and he is soon buffeted again on the waves of human vicissitude; he becomes secretary to an archbishop, who accepts his services on condition that he will not fail to warn him when he notices some decrease in his sacerdotal eloquence, and who dismisses him outrageously when he ventures to do so. At length he is in Madrid, the scene of his future reverses and good luck. His fate is to gain the favour of great men, and eventually to incur their displeasure. The duke of Lerma, prime minister of the Spanish monarchy, takes him as secretary, and soon our hero is his favourite. Gil Blas sells the favours of his master; he is now rich, courted, petted; he becomes an insufferable coxcomb, an undutiful son, and a faithless friend. But, alas for Gil Blas! the favour of great men is uncertain; they throw over their minion when their own interests are at stake. This Gil Blas finds out to his cost. Having, at the instigation of the duke of Lerma, taken a conspicuous part in a doubtful intrigue, concocted for the benefit of the Prince of Spain, our hero is suddenly hurled from his envied pedestal down to the cold stones of the dungeon of Segovia, where he is left for some months to meditate on the instability of human affairs. Fortunately his jailer is a friend of former days, and Gil Blas has a faithful servant, Scipio, who has saved some of his money. One fine morning he is set at liberty, and, with Scipio, resolves to pass the remainder of his days far from temptation, in the seclusion of rustic life; but, as he is about to effect this wise purpose,

he meets Don Alphonso de Leyva, his former noble patron and friend. On hearing that he was indebted to Gil Blas for the government of the town of Valencia, Don Alphonso presses upon him a charming little property, whither Gil Blas duly repairs with his faithful Scipio. He marries, is happy, and despises worldly vanities. And here indeed the story might come to a close without losing any of its zest. Le Sage, however, was easily persuaded to write a second part to his novel; and, unlike most of these literary extensions, this continuation was as spirited, as pointed, as interesting, as the first instalment. Gil Blas has become a widower; he is disconsolate, and his friends look for some means of diverting him. At this juncture Philip the Third dies, the duke of Lerma falls into disgrace, and Gil Blas is prevailed upon to return to court, and seek the favour of the count-duke of Olivarez. This time, again, Gil Blas becomes a favourite; but he has suffered, and inflicted suffering upon others; he has purified himself in affliction, and for ever conquered the weak side of nature. He uses his power with moderation and wisdom, and retains it until his master's death. Gil Blas, now a middle-aged man, finally retires on his pleasant property of Lirias; marries again, and, as he says, "has children, of whom he piously believes he is the father." Such is a very brief outline of this chronicle of life. It is so true, so realistic in detail, so natural in causes and consequences, that one can hardly refrain from falling into the belief that one is reading an autobiography; and yet the hero is only a secondary personage in a profoundly interesting and extensive drama—the drama of human life.

The first two volumes of *Gil Blas* were published in 1715, the very year in which Louis XIV. died, the third in 1724, and the last in 1735, twenty years after the two first, and eleven years after the third.

Le Sage appears to have led the life of a practical philo-

sopher : he lived in Paris until within the last few years of his life ; and Joseph Spence,[1] who visited him there, gives the following description of his dwelling :—

" His house is at Paris, in the Faubourg St. Jacques ; and so, open to the country air: the garden laid out in the prettiest manner that ever I saw, for a town garden. It was as pretty as it was small, and when he was in the study-part of it he was quite retired from the noise of the street or any interruptions from his own family. The garden was only of the breadth of the house, from which you stept out into a raised square parterre, planted with a variety of the choicest flowers. From this, you went down, by a flight of steps on each side, into a *Berceau;* which led to two rooms or summer-houses quite at the end of the garden. These were joined by an open portico, the roof of which was supported with columns, so that he could walk from the one to the other all under cover, in the intervals of writing. The berceaux were covered with vines and honeysuckles, and the space between them was grove-work. It was in the right-hand room, as you go down that he wrote *Gil Blas.*"

Le Sage also produced about sixty farces, parodies, and opéra-comiques for the minor theatres, of which a few may even be read at the present time with pleasure.

§ 2. Later Port-Royalists.

The school of the Port-Royalists was not yet extinct, though Jansenism had fallen into disfavour, and was the object of persecution. Charles Rollin[2] was one of the later disciples of Pascal and Arnauld, and he suffered for his fidelity. The son of a cutler in Paris, he received an excellent education at the University, of which he subsequently became a Professor, after which he was made Principal of the

[1] *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men*, section vi. 1740-41.

[2] 1661-1741.

College at Beauvais. A year or two before the death of Louis XIV., he was driven from his post, and thenceforth devoted himself to authorship. He published an edition of the *Institutes of Quintilian,* and afterwards a learned *Treatise on Studies,* which has been highly praised by critics as competent as Villemain,[1] who calls it one of the best written of French works after the productions of men of genius. Rollin was a man of ability rather than of genius ; and as a historian his talent is displayed in the highest possible form. His *Ancient History* and his *History of Rome*[2] are still consulted and admired, even after the labours of many more illustrious successors. His historical talent was exemplified especially in the care which he devoted to the collation and accurate citation of ancient authorities; and he deserves the eulogy which Montesquieu has passed upon him, as "the bee of France." His piety, his learning, and his simplicity, gained for Rollin a high repute amongst his contemporaries, which posterity has jealously guarded for him ; and it was to his charge that Racine, on his deathbed, committed the education and moral training of his son.

Louis Racine,[3] a Jansenist like his master, does credit to the care bestowed on him by Rollin, and brings no discredit upon the great name which he had inherited. He was another of the younger generation whom Boileau delighted to snub ; but in spite of the old man's discouragement—for he counselled him never to write in verse—Louis Racine left behind him a number of *Sacred Odes,* various minor poems, and two didactic pieces on *Grace* and *Religion,* of indifferent but not insignificant merit. He was, moreover, a German scholar in an age when the German language was understood by few foreigners ; and he made an abortive attempt to translate Milton's *Paradise Lost.* His life of his father, which has

[1] 1790-1867.

[2] Continued from the date of the battle of Actium, by his pupil Crévier.

[3] 1692-1763.

already come under notice, is a monument at once of careful compilation and of filial respect.

Daguesseau,[1] another Port-Royalist of the eighteenth century, *avocat-général*, and afterwards *procureur-général* to the Parliament of Paris, an orator, a jurisconsult, a statesman, and a moralist, was the author of several works of much dignity and worth, which added a lustre to his name and generation, though they are less read in our day than in his own. His writings were, indeed, especially suited to his contemporaries, by the graver of whom he was held in high esteem, though his stern and upright character rendered him obnoxious to men like Philip of Orléans, Cardinal Dubois, and their sycophants. A graphic picture of the times in which he lived may serve at once to illustrate his style, and to show that he at least had no illusions concerning the spirit and tendency of the later years of Louis XIV. Writing in 1698, he says–

"A restlessness, widely spread throughout the professions; an agitation which nothing can allay, inimical to repose, incapable of labour, bearing everywhere the burden of an unquiet and ambitious sloth; a universal revolt of all men against their condition, a kind of general conspiracy, wherein all seem agreed upon belying their characters; all professions confounded together, dignities disgraced, proprieties outraged; the majority of men, out of their ranks, despising their condition, and rendering it despicable; ever occupied with what they would wish to be, and never with what they are; full of vast projects, the only one which escapes them is that of being satisfied with their lot."[2]

[1] 1668-1751.

[2] "Une inquiétude généralement répandue dans toutes les professions, une agitation que rien ne peut fixer, ennemie du repos, incapable du travail, portant partout le poids d'une inquiète et ambitieuse oisiveté, un soulèvement universel de tous les hommes contre leur condition, une espèce de conspiration générale dans laquelle ils semblent être tous convenus de sortir de leur caractère; toutes les professions confondues, les dignités avilies, les bienséances violées; la plupart des hommes hors de leur place méprisant leur état et le

It was the spirit of the eighteenth century, revealed to this perspicacious mind before the century had opened. As we pass on we shall see yet more clearly the faithfulness of Daguesseau's forecast.

rendant méprisable. Toujours occupés de ce qu'ils veulent être et jamais de ce qu'ils sont, pleins de vastes projets, le seul qui leur échappe est celui de vivre contents de leur état."—1*ère Mercuriale.*

CHAPTER II.

§ 1. A Social Innovator.

France was ripening fast for a change, when the eighteenth century dawned; and if the influence of Louis XIV. in any appreciable degree retarded the new birth, it was only for a few short years. It was impossible any longer to suppress the activity of the human intellect; and though the weakness of the Regency[1] no doubt assisted its growth, the strictest personal despotism could not have availed to stifle the philosophy of a Montesquieu, a Voltaire, and a Rousseau. And this novel philosophy, be it observed, was in the first instance clearly exemplified in the political and economical maxims of its pioneers: maxims which had their origin in the bold speculations of English writers, but which, in England, rarely passed beyond the limits of speculation.

"Analogous theories," says a critic[2] whose general views are always essentially suggestive, "have frequently crossed the imagination of men, and analogous theories will cross it more than once again. In every age, and in every country, it suffices that a considerable change should be introduced into the conception of human nature, in order that, as a natural consequence, we should find immediately an ideal and a discovery brought to light in the domains of politics and religion. But this does not suffice for the propagation of the new doctrine, and especially not for the advance from speculation to appli-

[1] 1715-1723.

[2] H. A. Taine, *l'Ancien Régime*, bk. iv. ch. 1.

cation. Born in England, the philosophy of the eighteenth century could not be developed in England; the fever of demolition and reconstruction remained in that country superficial and momentary. Deism, atheism, materialism, scepticism, ideology, the theory of a return to nature, the assertion of the rights of man, all the temerities of Bolingbroke, Collins, Toland, Tindal, and Mandeville . . . all revolutionary doctrines were there but hothouse plants, budding now and again in the isolated studies of a few thinkers. In the open air they came to nought, after a short blossom, conquered by the too powerful rivalry of the old vegetation to which already the soil was devoted. In France, on the other hand, the grain imported from England shoots and springs up with extraordinary vigour. From the time of the regency it was in flower. Like a species favoured by sun and climate, it invades every district, appropriates the atmosphere and the light of day for itself alone, and barely suffers under its shadow a few sickly specimens of an inimical species, a survivor of the ancient vegetation like Rollin, an example of an eccentric flora like Saint Martin.[1] By its large trees, by its crowded undergrowth, with the countless display of its shrubs and creeping-plants; by Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Buffon; by Duclos, Mably, Condillac, Turgot, Beaumarchais, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Barthélemy, and Thomas; by the crowd of its journalists, of its compilers and its talkers; by the *élite* and the herd of philosophy, science and literature, it takes possession of the academy and the theatre, drawing-rooms and conversation. All the great men of the century are its offshoots, and amongst them a few are to be classed with the highest whom human nature has produced."

[1] Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) was a kind of spiritualistic mystic philosopher, who, first a lawyer, then a military man, abandoned everything else, and gave himself up wholly to the propagation of his doctrines.

The fact is, that speculation in England has nearly always been carefully distinguished from practical application; whilst in France it has nearly always been naturally and necessarily joined with it. In England there has been, for centuries back, so much political freedom and material prosperity, that Englishmen are slow to adopt violent methods of increasing these advantages, for fear of endangering what they already possess. In France, and especially in the eighteenth century, men had a minimum of political freedom and material prosperity, and they seized upon the ideas and devices which offered them the chance of increasing these, independently of their natural eagerness and curiosity of disposition. Moreover, the French intellect was particularly inclined, from the mere fact of its literary training and facility, to embrace with enthusiasm a course so full of promise as the adoption and development of a fresh and striking body of ideas.

In no one of the new generation of Frenchmen who came prominently forward soon after the death of Louis XIV., had these ideas taken such deep root, by none were they better understood or more clearly enunciated, than by Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu.[1] His *Persian Letters* (1721) glow with the spirit of the age; his great aim, born of the reaction against tyranny in general, and against the absolute monarchy in particular, was to destroy the idea of despotism, and to elevate the idea of human individual freedom. He was not a Rousseau in rashness, a Voltaire in vehemence, because he was an aristocrat by birth and education, because he clung to the traditions and the hopes of a constitutional monarchy, because he was an optimist by temperament, even if he inclined to be a democrat by conviction. He took a pride in drawing up his genealogy, of which he had every reason to be proud; but, in compensation,

[1] 1689-1755.

it was he who naturalised the term *citoyen*, in place of the discredited "subject"—a term which, from the moment of its rehabilitation, at once assumed dynamic force, and took its place in language and history as a monument of the destruction, at least in idea, of the old disgraceful relation of tyrant and victim. During the period elapsing between the appearance of the *Persian Letters* and the completion of the *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu waited, in common with the rest of France, for the realisation of the hopes which had been placed in Louis XV., "the well-beloved." No sooner had the illusion vanished; no sooner did it appear that to-day was to be as yesterday, and that the new king was unwilling or unable to remove the burdens imposed by his predecessors, than the temper and the intellect of the nation instinctively turned round and settled down to the task which was thenceforth seen to be inevitable. The Revolution was decreed: the people made its declaration of independence; and Montesquieu was its first, and perhaps its most effective mouthpiece.

Montesquieu, born at his ancestral castle of la Brède, near Bordeaux, in Guienne—the country of Montaigne, and later of the Girondins—became successively counsellor and *président à mortier*[1] of the Bordeaux parliament, by hereditary title, at the age of twenty-six. Here, to begin with, was a privilege liable to every kind of abuse and inconvenience; but Montesquieu does not seem to have realised the fact in that light. He compromised all his life between the actual and the ideal; and he hit the mean in this instance by retaining the accidental honour, and discharging the duties of the position in such a manner that no one might say an elected president would certainly have discharged them

[1] The *mortier* was a kind of round cap worn by the chancellor, first president, and grand presidents of parliament. The latter were properly called *présidents à mortier*. Their cap was of black velvet, with one gold stripe; the first president had the same cap, with two gold stripes, and the chancellor one made of gold cloth, and trimmed with ermine.

better.[1] Nevertheless, the bulk of his time was given to his private studies and researches; and he began—significant indication of the forward-reaching activity of his mind—with laborious efforts in the domain of natural science. But the materials for such researches were hardly yet ready to his hand. A generation later Buffon succeeded, and that with extreme difficulty, in approximating to a satisfactory classification of the families of nature; but Montesquieu's talents were not those of a Buffon; and it was not many years before he discovered wherein his strength really lay. He was in his thirty-second year when the *Persian Letters* were published; and though they bore no name upon the title-page, they at once secured success and influence. This semi-allegorical plan of conveying home-truths by speaking in the person of a foreigner, and thus placing oneself at a distance from one's subject-matter, in order to approach it more nearly—a plan adopted in England by Goldsmith,[2] no doubt in imitation of the *Persian Letters*—was not entirely an original idea with Montesquieu; for it had been partially employed by Dufresny;[3] but the fact subtracts little or nothing from the freshness of Montesquieu's work, which is signalised by a full richness of style, and by a powerful, mature, and hardy wit. The picture which he draws has two aspects. On one side we have a vivid description of the wretchedness and degradation produced by Oriental luxury, sloth, and despotism; on the other is set forth, with an infinity of vivacious touches, the parallel between Persia and France—the operation, already begun, of despotism, self-indulgence, and moral cowardice, in a country which, after a brief period of glory acquired for it under an absolute monarchy, had already lost the substance of prosperity, and was content to go on sporting with the

[1] Some time later he sold the post, which made too large a claim upon his time.

[2] *The Citizen of the World.*

[3] 1654–1724; *The Siamese*, in the *Amusements sérieux et comiques.*

shadow, beneath the crumbling walls of an edifice ever ready to fall and crush the votaries of pleasure. In the course of his indirect exhortations to patriotism and prudence, Montesquieu holds up to his fellow-countrymen the example of the Troglodytes, men who had fallen from depth to depth, who had purchased pleasure at the cost of liberty, and who had recovered the self-respect of humanity only at the cost of absolute self-denial and stern perseverance. The application of the fable was not to be missed, and the readers of the *Persian Letters* did not fail to perceive it. Voltaire seems to have thought more poorly of this work than it deserves, for he speaks of it as "trivial and easy to write." The description is hardly just; for though Montesquieu's idea, once conceived, needed little more than the free play of his imagination to carry out, there can be no question as to the value of the lessons which it conveys. None of them is more valuable than that which arises out of the episode of the seraglio.

Usbek, the Persian prince who has come to Paris in quest of knowledge and worldly experience, and whose letters to his friends form the bulk of the work, has left behind him in Ispahan his establishment of concubines and eunuchs. For some time the news which he receives of them is fairly satisfactory, but at length various troubles begin to arise. The chief of the eunuchs is weak; the women are subtle, and continue to deceive their guardians. Presently their treachery to their absent lord is discovered, and Usbek is tormented by letters which leave no doubt of the extent of his misfortunes. He writes to the chief eunuch, bidding him punish the offenders; the chief eunuch dies before opening the letter. His functions are assumed by the oldest and feeblest of the slaves, who is hoodwinked by the women; but at last another eunuch writes to his master, and again informs him of his disgrace. Usbek authorises him to take summary vengeance;

and amongst those on whom the effects of his anger fall most severely is his favourite Roxana. Here is the letter which she writes to the Prince:[1]—

"Yes, I have deceived you: I have seduced your eunuchs, I have made a sport of your jealousy, and I have managed to convert your frightful harem into an abode of delight and pleasures.

"I am going to die; the poison will soon be coursing through my veins; for what should I do here, since the only man who made me cling to life is no more? I die; but my spirit takes its flight in good company: I have despatched before me the sacrilegious guardians who have shed the best blood in the world.

"How could you deem me credulous enough to imagine that I was in the world only to adore your caprices; that whilst you

[1] This hundred and sixty-first *Persian Letter* is the last, and in the original is as follows:—

"Oui, je t'ai trompé: j'ai séduit tes eunuques; je me suis jouée de ta jalousie, et j'ai su de ton affreux sérail faire un lieu de délices et de plaisirs.

"Je vais mourir; le poison va couler dans mes veines; car que ferais-je ici, puisque le seul homme qui me retenait à la vie n'est plus? Je meurs; mais mon ombre s'envole bien accompagnée: je viens d'envoyer devant moi ces gardiens sacriléges qui ont répandu le plus beau sang du monde.

"Comment as-tu pensé que je fusse assez crédule pour m'imaginer que je ne fusse dans le monde que pour adorer tes caprices; que, pendant que tu te permets tout, tu eusses le droit d'affliger tous mes désirs? Non: j'ai pu vivre dans la servitude; mais j'ai toujours été libre. J'ai réformé tes lois sur celles de la nature; et mon esprit s'est toujours tenu dans l'indépendance.

"Tu devrais me rendre grâces encore du sacrifice que je t'ai fait; de ce que je me suis abaissée jusqu'à te paraître fidèle; de ce que j'ai lâchement gardé dans mon cœur ce que j'aurais dû faire paraître à toute la terre; enfin de ce que j'ai profané la vertu en souffrant qu'on appelât de ce nom ma soumission à tes fantaisies.

"Tu étais étonné de ne point trouver en moi les transports de l'amour: si tu m'avais bien connue, tu y aurais trouvé toute la violence de la haine.

"Mais tu as eu longtemps l'avantage de croire qu'un cœur comme le mien t'était soumis. Nous étions tous deux heureux: tu me croyais trompée, et je te trompais.

"Ce langage, sans doute, te paraît nouveau. Serait-il possible qu'après t'avoir accablé de douleurs je te forçasse encore d'admirer mon courage? Mais c'en est fait: le poison me consume: ma force m'abandonne; la plume me tombe des mains; je sens affaiblir jusqu'à ma haine; je me meurs."

allowed yourself every liberty, you had the right to mortify all my desires? No; I could live in servitude, but I was always free. I have reformed your laws upon those of nature, and my mind always maintained its independence.

"Yet you ought to thank me for the sacrifice I have made for you; for the fact that I have demeaned myself to appear faithful to you; that I have, like a coward, concealed in my heart what I ought to have displayed to all the world; in short, that I have profaned virtue by suffering men to call by this name my submission to your whims.

"You were astonished that you did not discover in me the transports of love: if you had known me well you would have discovered there all the violence of hate.

"But you have long had the advantage of believing that a heart like mine was subject to you. We were both happy: you believed me deceived, and I deceived you.

"This language will doubtless seem new to you. Would it be possible that, after having overwhelmed you with grief, I could force you to admire my courage? But here is the end; the poison consumes me, my strength fails me; the pen falls from my hands; even my hatred grows weak; I die."

Was all this fine irony, this subtle analysis, expended on a simple fiction, with no other object than to give pleasure to a frivolous circle of readers? Or was there not, even in these details of the harem, a lesson for the selfish votaries of pleasure, who sacrificed the spirit to the body, whose passions brutalised those on whom they were lavished, until, in the country of a Rambouillet, a La Fayette, a Sévigné, there was good reason why woman, the puppet-queen of the drawing-room, should turn round upon her possessor, and assert the independence of her heart?

The great popularity which the *Persian Letters*,[1] as well as the subsequent works of Montesquieu, obtained, was the effect

[1] Montesquieu himself tells us how the publishers went about "plucking all whom they met by the sleeves," and saying, "Sir, write me some *Persian Letters*."

and the illustration of the reaction which was taking place in the minds of Frenchmen. They were destroying the idols which they had worshipped in the age of Louis XIV. ; the intellect took its revenge for the subjection under which it had laboured, and the new-found liberty intoxicated all who tasted it. Just as dissolute manners, recklessness, audacity, succeeded the former piety, hypocrisy, and conventionality, so the liberty to write and speak everything without fear of suppression led men to produce, or to hail with enthusiasm, works in which the old order of things was condemned and ridiculed, and in which even religion itself was made the butt of sarcasm or the object of sceptical insinuation. Montesquieu gave his countrymen the kind of mental nourishment which they relished ; he did not hesitate, moreover, to tickle their appetite with passages of the voluptuous and suggestive kind which that generation particularly affected. When, in 1728, on the death of Louis de Sacy, Montesquieu became a candidate for the vacant place in the Academy, Cardinal de Fleury wrote to the thirty-nine academicians to say that the king would never give his sanction to the election of a man who had written a work containing impious sarcasms. Our author was enraged, threatened to leave the country, but at the same time had, in a few days, a new edition of his book printed, in which the passages which a cardinal or minister might condemn were either suppressed or softened, and presented himself this book to the cardinal.[1] This statement has, however, been denied, though it may have a slight substratum of truth. In any case Montesquieu was elected.

Before publishing anything further[2] Montesquieu travelled

[1] M. Walckenaer, in his *Life of Montesquieu*, prefixed to his collected works, Didot, 1854, says that Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, mentions this fact. I have, however, been unable to find it in this work.

[2] He had, however, in 1725, issued the *Temple de Gnide*, a somewhat heavy allegory, which Madame du Deffant styled the "Apocalypse of Gallantry."

for a few years in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, and England, where he went in Lord Chesterfield's yacht, and resided two years. At Rome he did reverence to Benedict XIV., and the latter sent him a batch of dispensations; but when the Frenchman learned the price which he was expected to pay for these, he declined them, saying that he should prefer simply to trust to the words of the Holy Father. In England he shone easily at the Court of George II., and was elected a member of the Royal Society. One day a bore was striving to make him believe something more or less incredible. "If it is not true," said the latter, "I give you my head." "I accept it," rejoined Montesquieu; "such little presents keep up friendly feelings." Yet his sarcasm was without bitterness; he made friends wherever he went, by dint of being all things to all men. "When I am in France," he said, "I make advances to every one; in England I make them to no one; in Italy I compliment every one; in Germany I drink with every one." One result of these travels was a pamphlet, *Reflexions on the Universal Monarchy in Europe*, of which only a few copies were privately printed; and a considerable part whereof was afterwards embodied in the *Spirit of the Laws*. In 1734, after two years of retirement at his quiet home at la Brède, appeared his *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness and Decline of the Romans*. In this work, a genuine monument of scholarship and judicious criticism, Montesquieu boldly places himself in rivalry with Machiavelli, Saint Evremond, and Bossuet, who had treated the same subject before; and in largeness of grasp and historical insight he undoubtedly shines by comparison with his predecessors. The style is a little unequal, and the treatment spasmodic; but the work bears throughout abundant evidence of conscientious thought. Take, for instance, the following sentences:—

"If Cæsar and Pompey had thought as Cato did, others would

have thought as Cæsar and Pompey did; and the Republic, destined to perish, would have been dragged to the precipice by another hand.

"Cæsar pardoned everybody; but it seems to me that the moderation one displays after usurping everything does not deserve great praise. . . .

"Was not the crime of Cæsar precluded from being punished otherwise than by assassination? And to ask why he was not attacked by open force, or by the laws, was not this the same as asking an explanation of his crimes?"[1]

"It was so impossible for the Republic to be re-established that there happened what had never yet been seen, that there was no longer a tyrant, and that there was no liberty; for the causes which had destroyed it still existed."[2]

In the age of Montesquieu this was a philosophy of history at once striking and fresh; and even in the nineteenth century historians might do worse than mould themselves on the style of this treatise.

But his masterpiece is the *Spirit of the Laws*, published a few years before his death, in 1748, of which Voltaire, not a specially favourable critic of Montesquieu, and who persisted in classifying him with the age of Louis XIV., says: "The human race had lost its titles: Montesquieu has recovered and restored them to it." The eulogy is deserved; and it was not without justifiable pride that the author himself

[1] "Si César et Pompée avaient pensé comme Caton, d'autres auraient pensé comme firent César et Pompée; et la république, destinée à périr, aurait été entraînée au précipice par une autre main. César pardonna à tout le monde; mais il me semble que la modération que l'on montre après qu'on a tout usurpé ne mérite pas de grandes louanges. . . Le crime de César, qui vivait dans un gouvernement libre, n'était-il pas hors d'état d'être puni autrement que par un assassinat? Et demander pourquoi on ne l'avait pas poursuivi par la force ouverte ou par les lois, n'était-ce pas demander raison de ses crimes?" *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, ch. xi.

[2] "Il était tellement impossible que la république pût se rétablir, qu'il arriva ce qu'on n'avait jamais encore vu, qu'il n'y eut plus de tyran, et qu'il n'y eut pas de liberté; car les causes qui l'avaient détruite subsistaient toujours."—*Ibid.* ch. xii.

wrote in his preface : "When I saw what so many great men in France, in England, and in Germany, had written before me, I was buried in admiration ; but I did not lose courage. I said with Correggio, 'I also am a painter.'"[1]

The aim of Montesquieu in this grand work is to a great extent didactic ; he attacks the prejudices of men. "I should think myself the happiest of mortals," he says, "if I could make men overcome their prejudices. I here call prejudices not that which causes one to be ignorant of certain things, but that which causes one to be ignorant of oneself." The twenty laborious years which the author dedicated to his task were spent in steadily working towards rather than upon recognised principles. "I have often commenced and often abandoned this work," he tells us. "I have a thousand times cast the sheets I had written to the winds ; every day I felt my hands sinking by my side ;"[2] I pursued my object without forming a plan ; I knew neither rules nor exceptions ; I found the truth only to lose it ; but when I had discovered my principles, all that I was seeking came to me." It is perhaps not the most scientific process : it is, at all events, the process of a man who can live twenty years without earning a penny ; it is the process of one who can wait upon the world and upon posterity, and from whom the world and posterity may expect great things.

Montesquieu begins by considering laws in general, and the varying character of laws as they proceed from different modes of government ; and in this examination he is guided by the conviction that law-makers "have not been governed solely by their caprices." He discovers a harmony amongst the laws of each nation, and even amongst the principles which have regulated the laws of different nations. Every law is found to be connected with all the rest, and to depend

[1] "Ed io anche son pittore."

[2] "Je sentais les mains paternelles tomber."—*Bis patriæ cecidere manus.*

on some other wider and more general law ; and it is only by throwing himself into the current of a nation's history, and by considering it esoterically, that he is able in all cases to discover this connection and interdependence. The system upon which he addresses himself to his task is simple and clear. Borrowing from Gravina[1] these two definitions : that the political state is the union of all individual forces, and that the civil state is the union of all individual wills, he proceeds to consider each particular law as relating to, and especially suited for, the particular nation which has enacted it, whether for the actual constitution of the state, as is the case with political laws, or for the conduct of the state, as with civil laws. At this point his system, so intelligently based, becomes notably expanded, by the introduction of a principle which, in his mouth, was almost, if not quite, original ; although it is now a generally recognised truth. Laws must bear relation " to the physical characteristics of a country, to a frigid, a torrid, or a temperate clime ; to the quality of the soil, to its situation, to its size, to the way of living of its people, whether labourers, hunters, or shepherds ; they must be accommodated to the degree of liberty which the constitution can support ; to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, to their wealth, to their number, to their commerce, to their customs, to their manners. Finally, they bear relations amongst themselves ; with their origin, with the object of the law-maker, with the order of facts upon which they are based."[2] Such, in short, is Montesquieu's method ; and he pursues it, historically and analytically, under this threefold division to begin with—according as the form of government is a republic, a constitutional monarchy, or a despotism.[3]

[1] Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664-1718) a celebrated Italian jurist, and Professor of Civil and Canon Law at the University of Rome, wrote the *Origines juris civilis.*

[2] *Esprit des Lois,* bk. i. ch. 3.

[3] La Harpe and others have professed themselves unable to see any but an

The strength of Montesquieu's work resides, perhaps, rather in its implications than in the actual deductions of the author. Its weakness has been considered, at all events by many of his own countrymen, to consist in the fact that he rests satisfied with historical analysis, and that, whilst his own bias is clearly towards popular sovereignty, he abstains from saying that full political rights can only be secured by popular sovereignty. Fourteen years after the first appearance of the work, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his *Social Contract*, wherein he says: "The only modern capable of creating that great and useless science (of political rights) would have been the illustrious Montesquieu. But he did not care to treat of the principles of political rights; he was content with treating of the actual rights of established governments; and nothing in the world is more different than these two studies. . . . The people gives neither chairs, nor pensions, nor seats in academies: judge whether its rights could be established by such men." The flaw in the criticism is manifest. The people—say a pure democracy—could and would give these and many other similar advantages; and Montesquieu's own arguments logically conduct to such a conclusion, as when he says that "not much probity is necessary for the maintenance and sustenance of a monarchical or despotic government. The force of laws in one, the arm of the prince ever upraised in the other, rule and contain all. But in a popular state, one spring more is needed, which is *virtue*."[1] The fact is that Montesquieu saw clearly both the abstract superiority of popular sovereignty and its impossibility as a concrete existence in his own day. Rousseau believed vividly in its possibility; but it often requires more than a century of vivid

accidental difference between the monarchical and the despotic government—a difference of illumination and good will in the supreme ruler. Could they see no necessary generic difference between the law-making power under Louis XIV. and William III. of England?

[1] *Esprit des Lois*, bk. iii. ch. 3.

belief to convert the idea into an actuality. Rousseau began pretty much where Montesquieu left off; and if there had not been a Montesquieu, we may be permitted to doubt whether there would have been a Rousseau.

There were two sentences in the *Spirit of the Laws*, wherein especially Montesquieu wrote the doom of aristocracy and absolute monarchy in France, and contributed as much as any other writer to the downfall of both. "The principle of the monarchy," he says, "is corrupted when the highest dignities are the brands of original servitude, when the respect of the people is robbed from the great, and when these are made the vile instruments of arbitrary power. It is corrupted still more when honour is put in contradistinction with honours, and when one can be at the same time covered with infamy and with dignities.[1] . . . The monarchy is lost when a prince believes that he displays greater power in changing the order of things than in following it; when he takes their natural functions from some in order to give it arbitrarily to others, and when he prefers his caprices to his convictions. The monarchy is lost when the prince, referring everything solely to himself, summons the state to his capital, the capital to his court, and the court to his person."[2] What an eloquent commentary on these texts must not every one who read them have supplied from the annals of the reign of Louis XIV., and from the events which were passing in France up to the very eve of the Revolution.

§ 2. The Political Economists.

A work like that of Montesquieu is of the few which invariably create a school. The *Spirit of the Laws* formed a

[1] *Esprit des Lois*, bk. viii. ch. 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, bk. viii. ch. 6.

school of upright statesmen and political economists—the school of Turgot and Quesnay, of Malesherbes and Necker. The first of these,[1] a sound and deliberate rather than a brilliant writer, an ambitious and generous rather than a successful politician, has been aptly called the l'Hôpital of the eighteenth century. After serving his country for some time in the comparatively inconspicuous capacity of intendant of the *généralité* of Limoges—a post which he refused to quit for more lucrative ones at Rouen and Lyons—he was appointed by Maurepas, at the instance of his friend the Abbé de Véri—minister of marine (1774), and shortly afterwards controller-general of the finances. It was one of those acts which so often, in the eighteenth century, gave true patriots a momentary gleam of hope that wiser counsels would be allowed to prevail in the government; for Turgot was already known, not only in the literary world but in the world of politics, as an honest, bold, and able man. In his youth he had raised his voice in the interests of the still-persecuted Protestants. His economical articles in the *Encyclopædia* had brought him into prominent notice about the time of Montesquieu's death, and had fixed upon him the hopes of thousands of his fellow-countrymen. He had had to wait long before he attained the object of his honourable ambition; but it was not in his destiny, nor in the destiny of France, that he should be allowed to rescue the nation. On the very day of his accession to office as controller-general he had an interview with the young king Louis XVI., wherein he unfolded the plan by which he pledged himself to save France from bankruptcy. He was asked to put down his ideas in writing; and he did so. He began by laying down the necessary conditions of success; —that there should be no further increase of taxation, no more loans, no more repudiations of liabilities on the part of public men, for the mere purpose of personal relief. He

[1] 1727-1781.

insisted that the expenditure should be rigidly reduced to twenty million francs below the revenue ; that the expenses of all public departments should be arranged in concert with the minister of finance ; that individual immunities and sinecures in the farming of the taxes should be abolished. "I shall be alone," he tells the king, "in the struggle against abuses of every kind, against the crowd of prejudices which are opposed to all reform, and which are such a powerful instrument in the hands of men interested in perpetuating disorder. I shall have to combat the natural kindliness, the generosity of your Majesty and of the persons most dear to him. I shall be feared, even hated by the majority of the Court. . . . The people for whom I shall be sacrificing myself is so easy to deceive that I may probably incur its hatred by the very measures which I shall take for its defence. I shall be calumniated, and perhaps with sufficient show of truth to deprive me of your Majesty's confidence. . . . Your Majesty will recollect that it is upon the faith of his promises that I take on myself a burden perhaps beyond my powers ; that it is to him personally, to the upright man, the just and good man, rather than to the king, that I commit myself."

It was a noble and a courageous offer, made by one who was really strong enough to carry out his plans. Louis was touched by it, entered into an engagement with the minister, and began by supporting him. But the court and the older counsellors of the king were stronger than he ; and Maurepas himself was amongst the first to oppose the alarming energy and obnoxious honesty of the controller-general. A yet grander exposition of Turgot's scheme for the reconstitution of public prosperity remains to us in a work drawn up by one of his friends ;[1] but the first manifestation of his designs was

[1] According to M. H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xvi. p. 324, probably Dupont de Nemours. I owe a great deal of this chapter to this excellent History of France.

sufficient to rouse an opposition, which, coupled with the weakness of his royal patron, neutralised his efforts. This is not the place wherein to follow the course of those efforts, to examine where and how far they succeeded, nor to compare the ideas of Turgot with those which, in one form or another, were brought into contrast with them—as in the case of the *Treatise on the Corn Laws* (*De la législation des Grains*), by the banker Necker. The political and economical literature of the eighteenth century would alone fill one of our volumes, by the mere examination of its conflicting views; and indeed it belongs rather to the domain of political than to that of literary history. Within a couple of years of the minister's appointment, he found a powerful league opposed to him; and Louis listened to his enemies, precisely as he had himself foretold. It was in August 1744 that Turgot assumed his functions; in May 1776 he sought an audience of the king, in order to propose an edict which he considered necessary, and which he prefaced as usual by a written exposition of motives. "Yet another memoir!" Louis ironically exclaimed. He listened to it, notwithstanding; and when Turgot had finished: "Is that all?" he asked. "Yes, sire!" "So much the better!" said the king, turning his back upon him. A couple of hours later Turgot received his dismissal. He lived barely five years longer; resembling de l'Hôpital in the manner of his death, as in the fortunes of his life.[1]

[1] Voltaire was a warm friend and admirer of Turgot; so much so, indeed, that the latter was compelled to ask him to be more discreet in his sympathy. Even after this, Voltaire wrote, in his *Past and Present:*

"Contemple la brillante aurore
Qui t'annonce enfin les beaux jours;
Un nouveau monde est près d'éclore:
Até disparaît pour toujours.
Vois l'auguste philosophie,
Chez toi si longtemps poursuivie,
Dicte ses triomphantes lois;
La vérité vient avec elle . . .
Quels dieux répandent ces bienfaits?
—C'est un seul homme! Et le vulgaire
Méconnaît les biens qu'il a faits!"

In his *Voyage of Reason* and his *Diatribe to the Author of the Ephemerides*, he had already lent his powerful, though sometimes compromising, assistance to the controller-general

I have called Turgot a disciple of the school of Montesquieu. He was a disciple also of Quesnay,[1] a learned physician, whose bold but somewhat crude work on political economy had inspired him, as it inspired many others of his contemporaries, with some of his best ideas. The witty and dissolute abbé Galiani, a Neapolitan, who lived for a long time in Paris, was amongst the literary opponents of Turgot's reforms, and pleased himself by declaring Quesnay to be the Antichrist. It was too great an honour, coming from such a man; for the godless rake in priest's garb, whose objection to Quesnay was incited by the latter's application of scientific laws to the amelioration of the condition of humanity, should have reserved the extreme epithet of his vocabulary for a more powerful writer. Nevertheless, Quesnay was a worthy pioneer of that school of political economy which considers the tiller of the ground as the principal column of the social edifice—a science called by Quesnay's disciple Dupont de Nemours *physiocratie*—and which contributed almost as much as the metaphysical school to the intellectual regeneration of France.

Amidst the crowd of innovators by whom our attention now begins to be distracted, of course utopists make themselves more or less prominent; and of these Bernardin de Saint-Pierre[2] was one of the most philanthropic and the most impracticable. A native of Havre, his adventurous career exhibits him successively as a scientific traveller in Martinique, an engineer at Dusseldorf, a professor of mathematics in Paris, a journalist in Amsterdam, an officer at St. Petersburg, an insurgent in Poland, an engineer again in the Ile-de-France. Attracted by the doctrines of Rousseau, he settled in Paris as a man of letters, where, from the age of forty until close upon his death, he published a large number of works, of great variety and of considerable charm of style:

[1] 1694-1774. [2] 1737-1814.

a *Voyage to the Ile-de-France, Studies on Nature, The Indian Cottage, The Harmonies of Nature,* and, most popular and charming of them all, *Paul and Virginia* (1787). His art was to paint in words; and he employed it, as a faithful student of nature, more successfully than any of his contemporaries. He conceived plans which, if they could be carried out, might undoubtedly abolish the greater part of human sorrow; for he always extolled humanity, tolerance, and the absolute sway of justice, and endeavoured to show that man can only be happy upon this earth by labour.

CHAPTER III.

§ 1. VOLTAIRE.

IN a pretty episode of one of his early works, *Rays and Shadows* (*Rayons et Ombres*), entitled *A Glimpse into an Attic*, Victor Hugo has drawn the picture of a young working woman of Paris. The furniture is scanty and simple; the room is tastefully but humbly adorned; over the chimney-piece hangs the decoration which her father had won by his merit and bravery; all speaks of innocence and contentment; but *latet anguis in herbâ*. What or who is the temptation which besets that ingenuous girl? From whence does danger threaten her? In a corner of the room, half hidden upon a cupboard, the serpent of this Eden lies ready to gloze in the ear of the guileless Eve. It is a volume of the works of Voltaire, "that ape of genius, sent as the devil's missionary to man." We know Victor Hugo sufficiently well, his boldness, his great services to his generation, the eloquent directness of the language with which he is wont to dazzle or sway the mind of his fellow-countrymen; and it is he who warns us against Voltaire as a missionary of the devil. De Maistre says very much the same thing.[1] Others have described him as an idiot, an unclean imbecile, a *drôle*, a *franche canaille*, and what not.[2]

[1] "Un homme unique à qui l'enfer avait remis ses pouvoirs."

[2] I am much indebted in this chapter to Paul Albert's "Voltaire" in *La Littérature française au dix huitième siècle*, as well as to G. Desnoiresterre, *Voltaire et la Société au 18ème Siècle*, 8 volumes.

It is now close upon a hundred years since his death, and the definite judgment of posterity has scarcely yet been passed upon François-Marie-Arouet de Voltaire.[1] His long life was a series of literary activities and successes, which left behind it, in the opinion of some, the greatest reputation gained by any French intellect of the eighteenth century, and, in the opinion of others, as we have seen, the greatest reproach which it is possible to conceive. Born as ugly as Pope, as sickly as Pascal, his genius burned from the first with remarkable brightness in its apparently frail tenement. He ate little, slept little, drank little but black coffee, and of that very much, and yet cheated death of his expectations for eighty-four years, as full of hard work and mental excitement as any of his contemporaries. A native of Poitou, bred in Paris, where his father was a notary, he received but an indifferent education at the hands of the Jesuits in the college Louis-le-Grand. They taught him "little Latin and less Greek"; and if they had laboured to make him a good Christian, or even a moral man, all that can be said is that they failed egregiously. On leaving college he fell into the most dissolute society in Paris; was twice banished from home by his father; and once ran away from the house of a *procureur* with whom M. Arouet[2] had placed him, and lived for some little time in Holland. On his return to Paris, where he was appreciated and esteemed by men of fashion as well as of letters, he earned fame at the age of twenty-four, by his earliest venture, the poetic tragedy of *Œdipus.* It was as a dramatist that he continued to write, with no little success, for many years, producing in quick succession *Artémise, Mariamne, Brutus, The Death of Cæsar, Mérope,* and a dozen other tragedies, together with half-a-dozen comedies of inferior merit.

In the meanwhile the anger of his father, softened by

[1] 1694-1778. [2] The family name of Voltaire.

his son's triumphs, had been followed up by the more formidable anger of the authorities. Even the Regency, lax enough to others, was scandalised and annoyed by the audacious satirist, and sent him three times to the Bastille: once for a copy of verses which some one else had written; once for a Latin epigram on the Regent, under the title of *Puero Regnante;* once for wishing to fight the chevalier Rohan-Chabot, who had set on his bullies to give the poet a drubbing. In addition to these imprisonments he had been sent out of the capital four or five times—to Sully, to Chatenay, and elsewhere, for various minor offences. He fared no better under Louis XV., who refused to accept the dedication of the *Henriade,* and forbade him to print it. His last sojourn in the Bastille was ended only on condition that he would go across the channel; and thus, at the age of thirty, he found himself with barely a friend in England. Between the years 1724 and 1730 he scarcely printed a line of French; but he was employing the period of adversity to good purpose. Deprived of his pensions, and in a country whose language he scarcely understood, Voltaire might have fared ill enough if he had not been sufficiently fortunate, some years before, to make the acquaintance of Lord Bolingbroke,[1] at the castle of the Marquise de Villette, at La Source, in Touraine. Bolingbroke, whose political crime had been pardoned, and who had returned to England, received Voltaire with every mark of good will. He might fairly have excused himself from benefiting him at all, and only have shown him cool politeness; for some time ago Voltaire had proposed to dedicate his *Henriade* to the Englishman, and had apparently soon forgotten that he had ever broached the subject. But Bolingbroke was not the man to recall what was, in fact, never intended as a slight; and the kindness which the poet now received from him was gracefully acknowledged in 1730, in the dedication of *Brutus.*

[1] St. John.

This play is preceded by a *Discourse on Tragedy*, in which Voltaire maintains the necessity of rhyme in French tragedy, says that Shakspeare was the only one, as acknowledged by Englishmen themselves, who made ghosts speak successfully, for "within that circle none durst move but he,"[1] and pretends that in France, "love among theatrical heroes often is nothing but gallantry, in England it sometimes degenerates into debauchery." Bolingbroke introduced Voltaire to his literary friends, Swift, Pope, Gay; and at Pope's villa of Twickenham he met many more congenial acquaintances. He speaks gratefully, in his letters to Thieriot and others, of the treatment which he received in England—from George II. amongst the rest. Before he left France, Voltaire had forwarded a letter of exchange to a London merchant; and, having left this for many weeks in his agent's hands, he found, on going to draw his money, that the man had just been made bankrupt. The king heard of this misfortune, and sent the poet a hundred guineas. The Frenchman was welcomed also to the house of Mr. Falkener, a city merchant living at Wandsworth, and to whom, later (1732), he dedicated *Zaïre*. In this dedication he says that all lovers of art are brethren, that the English possess a happy freedom of thought, that they have no need of the glances of the master to honour and reward great talents of every kind, and finally draws a contrast between the burial of Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle in Westminster Abbey, and the funerals of Molière and Mademoiselle Le Couvreur. When a second edition of *Zaïre* was published, Voltaire headed it with another letter to Mr. Falkener, who in the meanwhile had become English ambassador at Constantinople, in which he makes some remarks about Aaron Hill's translation into English of his tragedy, brought out as *Zara*; says that "Dryden, who was, however, a great genius, puts into the mouths of his heroes

[1] Voltaire quotes this line in English.

in love either rhetorical exaggerations or indecencies;" and finishes by stating that "the art of pleasing seems to belong to the French, and the art of thinking to the English." At Wandsworth, in fact, a great deal of his time was spent; and here, after reading Shakspeare, and for the first time beginning to appreciate him, he wrote the first act of his *Brutus* in English prose. Three months again were passed in the house of Lord Peterborough, Swift also being present during part of the time. Voltaire calls Swift "the Rabelais of good society;" but he seems to have preferred the society of Pope, "the most elegant, correct, and harmonious poet whom England has had."[1] The epithets are well chosen; and, at the time, they were undoubtedly just. Between Dr. Johnson and Voltaire there was a deep-seated antipathy, and the former states in his *Lives of the English Poets* that "Voltaire . . . had been entertained by Pope at his table, where he talked with so much grossness that Mrs. Pope was driven from the room." This anecdote may, possible enough, have had some foundation in fact. Voltaire may have forgotten himself for a moment; Mrs. Pope, an ardent Roman Catholic, may have taken offence; Johnson would be extremely likely, under such circumstances, to bring his heaviest artillery to bear upon the Frenchman; but, in any case, Voltaire and Pope undoubtedly maintained friendly relations for many years afterwards. Johnson says also, "Pope discovered by a trick that he (Voltaire) was a spy for the French, and never considered him as a man worthy of confidence."[2]

[1] Voltaire was under many literary obligations to Swift. Compare for example his *Relation de la maladie, de la confession, de la mort, et de l'apparition du Jésuite Berthier* (1759), to Swift's *Account of the death of Mr. Partridge*, and the *Answers* and *Vindication*. In his *Parallel between Horace, Boileau, and Pope*, Pope is praised for his *Essay on Man*, but Voltaire ridicules the English poet's portrait of Lord Hervey as Sporus, as well as the *Dunciad*.

[2] Voltaire returned the compliment; and as Johnson had treated him

Voltaire applied himself laboriously to the study of English, and read, amongst other English works, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which had been made fashionable by Addison's careful study of it in the *Spectator*. One day the Frenchman was railing at the "disgusting and abominable story," when Dr. Young, who was of the party, improvised a couplet in order to avenge his countryman :—

> "You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
> At once we think thee Milton, Death, and Sin."[1]

Whilst in England, our author published in English an *Essay on Epic Poetry*, destined to serve as an introduction to the *Henriade*, and an *Essay upon the Civil Wars of France extracted from curious manuscripts*. Both works were afterwards translated into French, though the latter was forbidden to be published in France. His English publications and reading did not, however, prevent Voltaire either from preparing fresh works in his own language, or from modifying what he had already written. The *Henriade*, of which a surreptitious and truncated edition had appeared in 1723, was published by subscription in a complete form in London, 1728, adorned with engravings, and most sumptuously printed. The king, the court, and a large number of English men of letters, made a point of adding their names to the list of Voltaire's patrons, which contained no less than three hundred and thirty-four names. The epic was dedicated to the queen, and we give the dedication as a specimen of Voltaire's English.

very contemptuously in his Preface to Shakspeare, wrote in the article "*Art Dramatique*" in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* : Je ne veux point soupçonner le Sieur Jonson d'être un mauvais plaisant, et d'aimer trop le vin ; mais je trouve un peu singulier qu'il compte la bouffonnerie et l'ivrognerie parmi les beautés du théâtre tragique."

[1] Johnson's "Young" in the *Lives of the English Poets*. Dr. Johnson seems, however, to doubt if this couplet was an "extemporaneous reproof," and quotes in support of this the poetical dedication of Young's Sea-piece to Voltaire.

Madam,

It is the fate of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by that great Elizabeth, who was in her age the Glory of her Sex. By whom can his Memory be so well protected, as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal Virtues?

Your Majesty will find in this book bold impartial truths, morality unstained with superstition, a spirit of liberty equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny, the rights of kings always asserted, and those of mankind never laid aside.

The same Spirit, in which it is written, gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who among so many crowned heads enjoys, almost alone, the inestimable honour of ruling a free nation; a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his Glory in being just.

Our Descartes, who was the greatest Philosopher in Europe, before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his Principles to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth, not, said he, because she was a princess, for true philosophers respect princes, and never flatter them, but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved Truth the most.

I beg leave madam, (without comparing myself to Descartes) to dedicate the *Henriade* to your Majesty, upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue, as well as to the highest rank, may it please your Majesty, your Majesty's most humble, most dutiful, most obliged servant, VOLTAIRE.

Three editions of the Henriade were sold in as many weeks. Eighty copies were subscribed for in France, and the books were sent to Thieriot; but whilst the latter was at mass, the supply which had been sent over from London was stolen from his residence. It is not quite clear on what grounds Thieriot has been accused of contriving the theft; but Voltaire's letter to him on the subject shows what was his own opinion of the matter. "This occurrence, my friend,

may sicken you of going to mass," he writes; "but it need not prevent me from continuing to love you, and to thank you for your trouble." "He has since offered," the poet writes to Destouches, "to reimburse me; but he would be ruined; and as for me, I should be unworthy of being a man of letters if I did not prefer losing a hundred *louis* to discommoding my friend." It has been said that, as a silent revenge for the failure of Sully's descendant to take notice of the outrage committed by de Rohan's bullies against Voltaire—for he was dining at the duke of Sully's when he was sent for by one of de Rohan's lackeys, and treacherously beaten—our author substituted the name of Duplessis-Mornay for that of Sully, in the verses wherein he had celebrated the virtues of Henry IV.'s famous minister.

After a three years' sojourn in England, Voltaire received permission to return to his native country. He went back in 1729, and lived for a while in Paris, and then in or near Rouen, where a new edition of the *Henriade*, under the name of the *Ligue*, was published, and where he completed the *Life of Charles XII.*[1] commenced in England. He had not left the land of his exile without bringing thence many favourable impressions, as well of its hospitality as of its liberty of action and opinion. Compared with the France of Voltaire's youth, England could boast of a free press, of freedom in religion, in philosophy, in criticism. Men like Newton, Locke, Shaftesbury, Toland, could write and teach what they thought; in France the slightest approach to innovation was almost certain to be suppressed as soon as it made its appearance. Voltaire could not be otherwise than forcibly struck by the contrast; and his *Philosophical Letters*, published as *Letters about the English*, bore witness to the strength of his impressions. In one of them, the thirteenth, he had lightly sketched one or two of Locke's ideas; and the Parliament of Paris at once ordered the book to be torn and burnt by the executioner.

[1] King of Sweden. 1682-1718.

In 1736 he wrote a treatise on the *Elements of Newton's Physics;* it was interdicted by Daguesseau, who was a zealous disciple of Descartes. The *History of Charles XII.* shared the same fate, on the pretext of an offence given to Augustus of Poland. The poetical *Epistle to Urania* caused Voltaire to be summoned before the lieutenant of police, and he only extricated himself by attributing his work to Chaulieu, who was dead; the *Temple of Taste* put Voltaire in dread of a *lettre de cachet;*[1] the privilege to print was refused to the tragedy *The Death of Cæsar;* the poem *The Worldling,* obliged him to flee for two months; the tragedy *Mahomet* was placed under interdict after two representations.[2]

Cardinal Fleury, the prime minister, died in 1742; and, on the entreaty of Voltaire's friends d'Argenson, the duke de Richelieu, and Madame de Pompadour, the author tried his hand as a courtier. For four years he wasted his time, writing such poems as *Fontenoy,* the *Events of* 1744, and such operas as the *Princess of Navarre,* and the *Temple of Glory.* He was made a gentleman of the king's chamber, historiographer-royal, and, after much opposition, a member of the Academy. He was now fifty-two years old; and he began to long more than ever for freedom and retirement. He had never succeeded in pleasing Louis XV., not even when he made a point of comparing him to Trajan! After the success of his *Temple of Glory,* he wrote an epigram on himself, which shows at what price he valued his triumphs at court.[3] Writing thirty

[1] A *lettre de cachet,* a letter folded and sealed with the king's *cachet,* or little seal, was an arbitrary warrant of imprisonment, and contained secret instructions o proceed against some person named in the letter. It was often signed in blank, so that the name of the person to be imprisoned could afterwards be filled up.

[2] Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième Siècle,* p. 127.

[3] "Mon Henri quatre, ma Zaïre,
Et mon américaine Alzire,
Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi:
J'avais mille ennemis avec très-peu de gloire.
Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
Pour une farce de la foire."

years later to the abbé Duvernet he says: "They who have told you that in 1744 and 1745 I was a courtier, have spoken a lamentable truth. I was so; I reproached myself with it in 1746, and I repented in 1747. Of all the time I have lost in my life, it is undoubtedly this that I most regret. It was not the time of my glory, if I ever had any." Added to his disgust with the court, Voltaire was troubled about this time by the desertion of the marquise du Châtelet, who had for some years been his mistress, but who now preferred the society of a younger and handsomer man, Saint Lambert. Moreover, another of his works drew down the censure of the authorities—*The Voice of the Sage and of the People,* wherein he maintained the rights of the state against the privileges of the corrupt clergy. Despairing at last of living with satisfaction in Paris, he listened to the temptations held out to him by Frederick of Prussia; and on the 28th of June 1750, he quitted the capital, to which he only returned to die, eight-and-twenty years later. The king "was well enough convinced," says Voltaire in his *Memoirs,* "that his verse and prose were far above my prose and my verse, so far as their matter was concerned; but he thought that, in respect of form, I might, in my capacity as an academician, give a certain rounding-off to his writings; there was no flattering seduction which he did not employ to make me come. How was I to resist a victorious king, a poet, musician, and philosopher, who made a show of loving me? I believed that I loved him."

The court of Frederick at Sans Souci was already the home of men like Maupertuis, la Mettrie, d'Argens, Chasot, Lord Tyrconnel, Pollnitz, and Algarotti; but it was the sojourn there of Voltaire which has given most notoriety to the assemblage of philosophers and flatterers who hovered about the person of the royal dilettante; concerning whom perhaps Jean-Jacques-Rousseau has recorded the fairest and best-deserved

judgment :—"I cannot esteem or love an unprincipled man, who tramples upon all laws, who does not believe in virtue, but regards it as a lure wherewith to amuse fools." During this period of his life Voltaire wrote many of his second-rate plays, a number of treatises, historical, satirical, and critical, including the *Diatribe concerning Doctor Akakia*, and a *Reply from an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris*, which elicited a rejoinder on the part of Frederick himself, in defence of Maupertuis, whom Voltaire had attacked.[1] From this time a coolness sprang up between the unequally yoked friends. In the end Voltaire left Prussia, but was arrested in Frankfort, and imprisoned in an hotel, by order of the arbitrary king, until he had returned a volume of the latter's poetical effusions. On his release he left Germany in disgust, in the year 1753, after a residence there of something over three years.

By this time Voltaire was a rich man,[2] and he could afford

[1] Maupertuis, President of the Berlin Academy, had undoubtedly done enough, by his alternate inaptitude and harshness, to arouse Voltaire's antipathy. Amongst other things, he was an ardent vivisectionist. In his letter on the progress of the sciences he writes : "I should be glad to see the life of criminals made serviceable in these operations, however little hope of success there might be in it ; but I believe that one might, without scruple, sacrifice it for knowledge of more extended usefulness. Perhaps we might make many discoveries concerning that marvellous connection of soul and body, if we dared to go in quest of the links in the brain of a living man. Let us not be moved by the appearance of cruelty which some might think they could perceive in this ; a man is nothing compared to the human species ; a criminal is even less than nothing." Another vivisectionist of the same age was the abbé de Saint-Ellier. The Duchess of Aiguillon said to him one day : "How can you, who are fond of cats, be so cruel ?" Whereto the physician : "Madam, there are inferior cats for these sorts of experiments." Frederick consoled Maupertuis for the *Diatribe* in his own peculiar style : "Mettez votre esprit en repos, et ne vous souciez pas du bourdonnement des insectes de l'air. . . . Vous n'avez à appréhender que la mauvaise santé."

[2] Voltaire had learned, while in England, that riches mean generally independence. He made money by taking with a company all the shares of a lottery, by which they realised a million of francs. In 1733 and 1734 he took, by the advice of the financier, Paris-Duverney, a share in the contract for pro-

to wait until he met with an asylum entirely to his mind. He bought an estate near Geneva, on neutral ground, which he called *les Délices;* a house at Lausanne, for the winter season; and, in 1758, he bought and settled down at Ferney, in France, on the borders of Switzerland. From the moment when he gave up dancing attendance upon kings and courts, he began again to produce work more worthy of his genius. The productions dating from the last and most fertile period of his life are very numerous. They include the *Chinese Orphan* (*l'orphelin de la Chine*), *Socrates*, *Tancred*, the *Scotchwoman* (*l'Ecossaise*), *Saul*, *Olympia*, the *Triumvirate*, the *Scythians*, the *Fire-worshippers* (*Guèbres*), the *Laws of Minos*, and *Irene*, amongst his plays; the *Pucelle*, an obscene, poor, and dreary attempt at an epic, which was received with enthusiasm by his contemporaries, and which, in fact, had been lying half-finished in his desk. Amongst his shorter poems and satires we have the *Poor Devil*, the *Russian in Paris*, *Vanity*, his *Epistles to Boileau, to the Emperor of China, to Horace*, etc., which contain some of Voltaire's happiest efforts. Of his prose works, the *Essay on the Manners and the Spirit of Nations*, wherein his English sympathies are again clearly manifested, appeared in 1756; and this was followed by his *Philosophical Dictionary*, a *Philosophy of History*, a *History of Parliament*, a *Treatise on Tolerance;* and his tales, including *Candide*, *l'Ingénu*, the *History of Jenny*, and the *Voyage of Reason*. At the same time he wrote numberless polemical

viding the army of Italy with provisions, which brought him about 800,000 francs. From 1733 to 1746 he was a partner of a M. Dumoulin, a large corn-dealer, who sent for his grain to Barbary; in 1743 he joined Marchand, a relative of his, in furnishing ten thousand uniforms to the militia. Voltaire and the abbé Moussinot dealt in pictures; he had shares in several vessels trading with Cadiz and with the East Indies; he had lent money to several princes and noblemen, for which he received an annuity; and on the 13th of February 1745 he inherited, through the death of his brother, 200,000 francs. It is said that, whilst living at Ferney, Voltaire had a yearly income of about ten thousand pounds sterling.

tracts, of great force and sense, besides keeping up a correspondence, of which the extant letters alone fill many volumes.

For a long time Voltaire had wished to return to Paris, and on the 10th of February of the year 1778 he did return there. He received many visits and invitations from the highest nobility and from his admirers, attended the rehearsals of his *Irene,* and was present at the sixth representation of that tragedy at the Théâtre Français, where he received a perfect ovation, and where his bust was crowned upon the stage amidst the applause of the spectators. But all this bustle was too much for a man who was more than eighty-four years old, and he died on the 30th of May of the same year.

It may be interesting to give here a sketch of Voltaire and of his way of living, taken by an Englishman, one of his contemporaries, and who "had frequent opportunities of conversing with him:"—

"The first idea which has presented itself to all who have attempted a description of his person is that of a skeleton. In as far as this implies excessive leanness, it is just; but . . . the most piercing eyes I ever beheld are those of Voltaire, now in his eightieth year. His whole countenance is expressive of genius, observation, and extreme sensibility. In the morning he has a look of anxiety and discontent; but this gradually wears off, and after dinner he seems cheerful:—yet an air of irony never entirely forsakes his face, but may always be observed lurking in his features, whether he frowns or smiles. When the weather is favourable, he takes an airing in his coach, with his niece, or with some of his guests, of whom there is always a sufficient number at Ferney. Sometimes he saunters in his garden; or, if the weather does not permit him to go abroad, he employs his leisure hours in playing at chess with Père Adam;[1] or in receiving the visits of strangers . . . or in dictating and reading letters. . . . By far the greater part of his time is spent in his study; and whether he reads himself, or listens to another, he always has a pen in his hand, to take

[1] A Jesuit, who lived in Voltaire's house.

notes, or make remarks. Composition is his principal amusement. . . . When engaged preparing some new production for the press, indisposed, or in bad spirits, he does not dine with the company; but satisfies himself with seeing them for a few minutes, either before or after dinner. . . . The forenoon is not a proper time to visit Voltaire. . . . Those who are invited to supper have an opportunity of seeing him in the most advantageous point of view. . . . When surrounded by his friends, and animated by the presence of women, he seems to enjoy life with all the sensibility of youth. His genius then surmounts the restraints of age and infirmity, and flows along in a fine strain of pleasing, spirited observation, and delicate irony. He has an excellent talent of adapting his conversation to his company."[1]

Dr. Moore gives us also a picture of Voltaire's behaviour at the theatre :—

"A company of French comedians . . . have erected a theatre at Chatelaine . . . about three miles from the ramparts of Geneva. . . . The play begins at three or four in the afternoon, that the spectators may have time to return before the shutting of the gates. I have been frequently at this theatre. The performers are moderately good . . . but when I go my chief inducement is to see Voltaire, who generally attends when Le Kain acts, and when one of his own tragedies is to be represented. He sits on the stage, and behind the scenes; but so as to be seen by a great part of the audience. He takes as much interest in the representation as if his own character depended on the performance. He seems perfectly chagrined and disgusted when any of the actors commit a mistake; and when he thinks they perform well, never fails to mark his approbation with all the violence of voice and gesture. He enters into the feigned distresses of the piece with every symptom of real emotion, and even sheds tears with the profusion of a girl present for the first time at a tragedy. I have sometimes sat near him during the whole entertainment, observing with astonishment such a degree of sensibility in a man

[1] *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany*, by John Moore, M.D., 1780. Letter xxix. Third edition. The first edition appeared in 1778.

of eighty. This great age, one would naturally believe, might have considerably blunted every sensation, particularly those occasioned by the fictitious distresses of the drama to which he has been habituated from his youth. The pieces represented having been wrote by himself, is another circumstance which, in my opinion, should naturally tend to prevent their effect on him. . . . I should be glad, however, to see Voltaire present at the representation of some of Corneille or Racine's tragedies, that I might observe whether he would discover more or less sensibility than he has done at his own. We should then be able to ascertain this curious disputed point, whether his sympathy regarded the piece or the author." [1]

The temptation to linger over the life and opinions of Voltaire, beyond what is possible in such a work as the present, is very great. The significance of such a man in his generation, and his influence upon the generations which succeeded him, cannot easily be overrated. The philosophy of the revolution, so far at all events as it was confined to ideas, occupied so entirely the mind and heart of the lord of Ferney that it was impossible for him to contain it, or to abstain from preaching it on every opportunity, "through every outlet and every channel, by prose and poetry, by grand or fugitive verses, by the drama, by history, romance, pamphlets, discussions, treatises, brochures, by his dictionary, by correspondence, in public, in secret, so as to let it penetrate to every depth and in every soil." [2] His boast that he had done more in his time than Luther and Calvin was in one sense true enough; though indeed Luther and Calvin were amongst his own intellectual creators. His effect upon his age was as immeasurable as his activity; and it would be hard to set any limit to the authority exercised by Voltaire upon the France of the eighteenth century, which was so soon

[1] *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany*, by John Moore, M.D., 1780. Letter xxx.

[2] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. iv. ch. 1. J. Moore, *A View of Society and Manners in France, etc.*, Letter xxix.

after his death to translate his opinions into acts. To prove and illustrate this, step by step, would require perhaps as much space as is here devoted to the whole survey of French literature. We can only state in a summary way that Voltaire as a philosopher was no metaphysician, for, according to him "metaphysical writers are like minuet-dancers; who, being dressed to the greatest advantage, make a couple of bows, move through the room in the finest attitudes, display all their graces, are in continual motion without advancing a step, and finish at the identical point from which they set out;"[1] but he was a firm and convinced Deist;[2] a bitter enemy of all sorts of fanaticism, and what he thought to be Christianity; an ardent champion of tolerance, and a strenuous defender of the notion of an innate feeling of justice.[3] And now we must, in short, be content to take Voltaire's measure as a dramatist and a historian, and pass on from him to his fellow-workers.

The first and perhaps the best of Voltaire's plays, the *Œdipus*, is after the classical model of tragedy, to which alone the play-going public of his age, or such part of it as he then wished to satisfy, would listen. It was a style in which Racine had found no worthy successor—no one, that is, who could be purely tragic, purely classical, and at the same time elegant and dignified. Many had dared and attempted the task, La Motte amongst them, but none had been equal to it. Voltaire felt what he conceived to be an adequate inspiration; and he would have been still more justified in his confidence than he actually is, if he had not been tempted to mar the severe beauty of his creation by pandering, in however slight a degree, to the popular taste for high colouring and sensational glitter. The explanation of his

[1] See *les Cabales, les Systèmes, à l'Auteur du livre des trois imposteurs.* His *Candide*, though bitter and full of scathing irony, ends with a glorification of work, "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."

[2] See *La loi naturelle.* [3] See the *Discours sur l'homme.*

weakness is simple: he wrote in and for the eighteenth century: he was to this extent moulded by his public. Approaching his task with every instinct of ambition, he selected for his subject one of the loftiest themes of Sophocles, which had been adorned or marred by many imitators; he wrote simply, brilliantly, and with adequate force; but he fell short of the almost religious gravity necessary for the worthy cultivation of a field on which even Racine thought himself incapable of challenging comparison with the Greek. Voltaire, there can be little doubt, imagined that he had at least equalled Sophocles; though he himself came to admit that in introducing his retrospective love-scenes between Philoctetes and Jocasta, he had in some degree profaned his ideal. When the veteran scholar Dacier advised Voltaire to translate literally the choruses of Sophocles, the young poet laughed. He thought he was capable of something more than translation; and he set to work by altering the Greek dramatist's plan. For Creon, whose cause of quarrel with Œdipus was in itself tragic—the murder of Œdipus' father—he substituted Philoctetes; he banished the children of his hero; he heightened the stage effect of the plot by reserving its dénouement; he softened the violence of the tragic elements as they were physically exhibited upon the Greek stage; and, in short, he continually kept before his mind the fact that he was writing for the elegant and fastidious court of the Regency. What could compensate for the substitution of a French Philoctetes, doting on a venerable reminiscence of love, in place of the grandly simple Creon, returning from Delphi crowned with laurels? What could atone, in the mind of any one who has read the masterpiece of Sophocles, for the loss of his grandest choruses of lamentation, praise, and enthusiasm? Certainly nothing which Voltaire has supplied in their place: certainly not the courtly harangues of Philoctetes, or the feminine loquacity of Jocasta. These are, it may

be, amongst the almost inevitable results of a modernisation of a lofty classical theme; but it must be admitted that Voltaire's mode of treatment has rendered them more conspicuously unfavourable than they need have been. His best work was too good to be spoiled by the introduction of trivialities, against which his taste must have rebelled. Setting aside the comparison, we have in this play of Voltaire's a thoughtful and brilliant conception, admirably worked out. Nothing could be finer than certain parts of the chorus of Greeks, with its frenzied defiance of the cruel gods;[1] or than the quiet dignity of despair with which Jocasta accompanies her death.[2] If he could always have been equally severe and dignified, he would have been entitled to a closer juxtaposition with Racine, if not with Sophocles.[3]

Artémise and *Mariamne*, which succeeded *Œdipe*, were not well received; and it was fortunate for the French stage and for Voltaire that the latter was exiled to England, and had to study Shakspeare, and some other English

[1] "Frappez, dieux tout-puissants, vos victimes sont prêtes :
O morts, écrasez-nous ; cieux, tombez sur nos têtes ;" etc.

[2] For instance :

"Au milieu des horreurs dont le destin m'opprime,
J'ai fait rougir les dieux qui m'ont forcée au crime."

[3] Œdipus and Jocasta are overwhelmed by the discovery of the fatal secret which is to cost them both their happiness and life. The idea of the tragedy is seized : and with Sophocles nothing remains but to wrestle with the gods. Voltaire, on the other hand, continues to dally with the details of the past.

Œd. Dépeignez-moi du moins ce prince malheureux.
Joc. Puisque vous rappelez un souvenir fâcheux,
Malgré le froid des ans, dans sa mâle veillesse,
Ses yeux brillaient encor du feu de la jeunesse.
Son front cicatrisé, sous ses cheveux blanchis,
Imprimait le respect aux mortels interdits ;
Et si j'ose, seigneur, dire ce que je pense,
Laïus eut avec vous assez de ressemblance ;
Et je m'applaudissais de retrouver en vous,
Ainsi que les vertus, les traits de mon époux.

See Villemain, *Tableau de la littérature au dix-huitième siècle*, 4th Lecture, to whom I owe the comparison between the tragedies of Voltaire and Sophocles

dramatists, before he again took the ear of a French public. Amongst the plays which established his dramatic reputation after the year 1730, *Zaïre* was perhaps the best. Voltaire had not read *Othello* for nothing, although he did grievously complain of Desdemona's handkerchief. His inferiority to Shakspeare is no less marked in this drama than his inferiority to Sophocles was in *Œdipe;* though the comparison is not so strongly challenged. The hero of *Zaïre* is a jealous sultan, Orosmane, who is young, handsome, a powerful prince, the opposite in all things to Othello except his jealousy. In the end he discovers that the person whom he thought guilty was Zaïre's brother, Nerestan, but the discovery is made too late, for he has stabbed her, and nothing remains to the unfortunate lover except to avenge her by killing himself.[1] The jealousy of the sultan has no visible motive like Othello's, and is only based on a suspicious letter, whilst the Moor's has been diabolically fanned by Iago—a character wanting in *Zaïre*—and is kept up, and finally brought to a crisis by the very innocence and artlessness of Desdemona. The speech of *Othello* when he tells how he won Brabantio's daughter: "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, and I lov'd her, that she did pity them," is superior to Orosmane's speech to Zaïre about his politics, his plans for the future, the exploits of his ancestors, and his promise not to employ "these Asiatic monsters, insulting guardians of the seraglio of the sultans."[2] In how natural a way does Othello, when roused by Iago, answer Desdemona

[1] Of course Zaïre is killed, not in sight of the public, but behind the wings, crying out, "Je me meurs, O mon Dieu!" Orosmane, before stabbing himself, offers to Nerestan the odd present of

"Ce poignard, que mon bras égaré,
A plongé dans un sein qui doit m'être sacré."

[2] "Ne croyez pas non plus que mon honneur confie
La vertu d'une épouse à ces monstres d'Asie,
Du sérail des soudans gardes injurieux,
Et des plaisirs d'un maître esclaves odieux.

Act I. Scene 2.

every time by asking for "the handkerchief;" but Orosmane, even after having read the letter to Zaïre, in which a secret meeting is appointed, says in the most polite manner that "if the invincible power of some other love" sways her, she should acknowledge it, and be pardoned that very moment, on condition of abandoning the insolent fellow who adores her.[1] And who can for one moment compare the last words of Desdemona, "Commend me to my kind lord; O farewell," with those of Zaïre; or the grand death of Othello, and his final speech, with the last utterance of Orosmane, who, after he has stabbed himself, with his dying breath recommends his followers "not to do any injury to Nerestan, but to lead him back"?[2] Let us admit, however, that if Shakspeare gave birth to the central idea of *Zaïre* all the rest is undoubtedly Voltaire's; and it is undeniably excellent. The episode of Lusignan, recognising in Zaïre and Nerestan his long-lost children, has a charm which will make Voltaire's tragedy perennial.[3] *Brutus* contains some reminiscences of Addison's *Cato;* the *Death of Cæsar* is a fine study after Shakspeare and Corneille, but not equal to his masters; *Alzire, Zulime,* and *Tancrède,* might possibly be referred, in some slight degree, to another school of English drama. In all of these the hand of Voltaire works independently, and works, too, with a genius and skill essentially French. Here, as in everything else which he created, the innovation is above all manifest; and the plays which he wrote during the last period of his life, from the date of his settling at Ferney, were rather philosophical and moral harangues than success-

[1] "Si de quelqu' autre amour l'invincible puissance
L'emporte sur mes soins, ou même les balance
Il faut me l'avouer, et dans ce même instant,
Ta grâce est dans mon cœur, prononce, elle t'attend.
Sacrifie à ma foi l'insolent qui t'adore."

Act IV. Scene 6.

[2] "Respectez ce héros, et conduisez ses pas."

[3] See Villemain, already quoted, 9th Lecture.

ful productions of dramatic art. "After the Revolution Voltaire's plays were frequently acted; not so much, perhaps, on account of their dramatic merit as because they abounded in lines and couplets which a liberated people could applaud to the echo;—such, for instance, as these: "I am the son of Brutus, and I bear liberty and a horror of kings engraved in my heart." "The right of governing is not an advantage transmitted by nature like an inheritance." "Injustice ends by producing independence." "He who is born in the purple is rarely worthy of it. The first king was a lucky soldier." "He who serves his country well has no need of ancestry. Mortals are equal; it is not birth, but virtue alone which makes the difference." Occasionally, however, a slight change was necessary, even in the works of Voltaire, before they could please the gods of the Revolution. He had written, "To arrest a Roman on suspicions alone is to imitate kings; whilst we punish them." After 1792 this became, "To arrest a Roman on mere suspicion can be allowed only in time of revolution."[1]

Amidst all the variety of Voltaire's literary work, he entered into nothing more eagerly, and succeeded in nothing more genuinely, than his historical studies. I say advisedly studies; for in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, Voltaire was a laborious and conscientious historian, who both read and thought much before he sat down to write. His *History of Charles XII.* has been deservedly admired for its style, its easy grace and dignity of narration; and it is none the less admirable for its correctness and impartiality. The author does not sacrifice facts to effects; he writes brilliantly and yet soberly; if he is a poet, and at times a special pleader, he is still a philosopher and a critic, and he is never willingly unjust. It is true that his judgment is here and there at fault; notably in his *Age of Louis XIV.*, perhaps

[1] See Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 193.

one of the earliest of his historical conceptions, though it was not published until 1745. It was difficult for a young man of generous tendencies, born within the seventeenth century, not to be more or less dazzled by the splendours of that brilliant age, especially when he considered it as a whole, or perhaps more particularly in its earlier phases. Later in life Voltaire called the Augustan age "an age of great talents, far rather than of great lights." But he had been brought up in the ideas of the courtiers, and his early impressions in this respect retained much of their force, even until the close of his life. With all his courage and all his aspirations, in spite of all the emancipations of the eighteenth century, Voltaire's predilections were essentially monarchical ; and his admiration for the Augustus of French literature is not so much out of harmony with the rest of his ideas as it seems to be. He appears to have longed for the advent of an aristocracy of philosophers and men of talent, for a perfect liberty in literature, but not to have cared greatly for political liberty.[1]

Let us not forget that he protected and gave a dowry to the grand-niece of Corneille ; that he attacked the magistrates of Toulouse because they had burned to death Calas, a Protestant, falsely accused of having killed one of his sons who wished to become a Catholic, and that he never rested until he had rehabilitated Calas's memory ; that he succeeded in snatching Sirven, another Protestant, accused of a similar crime, from the clutches of stupid and brutal judges ; that he protested against the condemnation of Lally-Tolendal, whose memory was also finally rehabilitated ; that he publicly denounced and wrote against the beheading of a boy of seventeen years old, la Barre, accused of having mutilated a cruci-

[1] Voltaire wrote in 1768 : "What regards the people, they will always be stupid and barbarous. They are oxen which require a yoke, a goad, and some hay." But he calumniated himself and humanity when he wrote : "It is because one has been snubbed in a palace by an insolent domestic that one groans over the fields laid waste."

fix; that he defended Madame Montbailly, unjustly accused of parricide, and who, through his strenuous efforts, was declared innocent; and that, finally, he wrote manfully in favour of the serfs of Mount Jura. During the last years of his life he had become the arbiter of public opinion in Europe, and his colossal reputation has done him more harm than good with posterity. He is now generally recognised as a literary man of great talents, who was neither in morality nor in character better or worse than his contemporaries, but who possessed a heart filled with love for humanity, a pen which could make itself felt when it attacked an enemy or defended a friend, and who perhaps enjoyed the wielding of that pen more than was good either for his moral or literary dignity.

§ 2. Voltaire's Enemies

Voltaire's literary friendships and enmities would take long to narrate. Amongst the latter must be specified his antipathy to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It was a mutual dislike, which dated from their first meeting in Holland, and which may be put down to the instinctive jealousy of two strongly sensitive minds, over-much alike in their ill-restrained spirit of independence, and at the same time antagonistic in their breeding and natural characteristics. Elie-Catherine Fréron,[1] a pungent critic, a scholar, and a man of considerable solidity of mind, was a less eminent mark for Voltaire's satire. In 1745 he began his *Letters on Certain Writings of this Age*, in which he took Voltaire as the special subject-matter of his criticism. Nine years later these letters had expanded into the *Année Littéraire*, in which the Encyclopædists generally came in for a share of his attention. His friend and literary mentor, the abbé Desfontaines, had encouraged him to the task, and

[1] 1719-1776.

assisted him in this and other journalistic ventures, whereby they reaped for some time as much as fifty thousand francs a year. But Fréron was more conservative than the Government itself; and when Louis XV. died, and gave place to Louis XVI. and his ministry of philosophers, the privilege of the *Année Littéraire* was withdrawn. The news gave the editor an apoplectic stroke; and he died of it in the year 1776. He has been immortalised by Voltaire in a not very satisfactory satire in verse, *Le Pauvre Diable;* and in a comedy, *The Scotchwoman*, acted on the 26th of July 1760, which Voltaire pretended to have translated from the English, and wherein Fréron, under the name of Frélon (*Anglice* Wasp) — and at the representations under the name of Wasp only—figures as a spy and a scribbler who will do any dirty work for money. Fréron was himself present at the two first representations of the piece, and printed a few days afterwards an account of it in his paper, *l'Année Littéraire,* in which he took his revenge without insulting any one, and replied to Voltaire's attack by witticism. Fréron had certainly the best of it. This play was remodelled for the English stage by Colman, and had some success as *The English Merchant.* Freeport, a benevolent English merchant, is one of the heroes of the piece. Fréron is called Spatter, and the piece is dedicated to Voltaire, and was acted in the month of February 1767. Voltaire never ceased to wage war against Fréron, and to attack him in epigrams which are more bitter than witty.[1]

Gilbert[2] has left a deeper mark on the literature of his

[1] We give one as a specimen :—

"L'autre jour au fond d'un vallon, Que pensez-vous qu'il arriva ?
Un serpent piqua Jean Fréron, Ce fut le serpent qui crêva."

An anecdote is also told how a gentleman, walking with Voltaire in the latter's garden, saw a toad, and, in order to please Voltaire, said, pointing at the animal, "There is a Fréron." "What can that poor beast have done to you," replied the wit, "to deserve such a name?"

[2] 1751-1780.

age than Fréron. The son of a peasant, weak in body and easily hurt in mind, he had a soul above his birth and training, and contrived to reap in the capital a fair meed of reputation. Voltaire nowhere so much as mentions him; though he often wrote and spoke against Voltaire, as well as against others of his contemporaries.[1] Gilbert, though he died at the age of twenty-nine, has left works that still live; and especially a couple of satires, *The Eighteenth Century* and *My Apology:* bitter, vengeful, and forcible productions, more distinguished for their matter than their manner. Another of the butts of Voltaire's energetic and often spiteful contempt was the marquis Le Franc de Pompignan,[2] a lyrical poet of some sweetness, and a prose writer not to be despised, who enjoyed the friendship of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, the poet. He was a man worthy of friendship, whatever may be thought of his literary merits; but he annoyed Voltaire by protesting, in his speech as a member of the Academy, with the earnestness of an ardent Christian, against the tendencies of the innovating philosophy of the age. Pompignan was in fact a man of considerable courage, and went so far as to make representations to the king himself concerning the miseries under which the people were groaning. Unfortunately he was very pompous in his style, and preached in solemn tone when he should have been satisfied with the part of an essayist or a satirist. Voltaire took him at his weakest, and slew him with ridicule.[3] "L'ami Pompignan" wrote some passable "sacred poems," which his tormentor said were so sacred that nobody would touch them; a drama on the subject of *Dido,* which had some success; and an ode on the

[1] Thus he speaks of d'Alembert—

"Ce froid d'Alembert, chancelier du Parnasse,
Qui se croit un grand homme, et fit une préface."

[2] 1709–1784.

[3] "César n'a point d'asile où son ombre repose,
Et l'ami Pompignan pense être quelque chose."—*La Vanité.*

death of his friend Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, in which there are some really fine stanzas. He was also a good classical and English scholar, and translated into French the *Universal Prayer* of Pope and some scenes of Shakspeare.

Another of the victims of Voltaire's satires was Jean-Baptiste Gresset,[1] an emancipated Jesuit, who wrote verses not unworthy of a comparison with those of his satirist, and who was, at the same time, a dramatist and a didactic poet. His tragedies of *Edward III.* and *Sidney,* and his comedy of *Le Méchant,* were perhaps not much read outside the circle of his friends; but the latter is at least worth reading. He had hardly completed it when he wrote a letter in condemnation of the stage; whereupon Voltaire assured him that he had no cause for self-reproach, and that he was unjustly accusing himself when he regretted having written a comedy. His poems of *La Chartreuse, The Living Lute,* one or two letters in verse, and, above all, his poem, *Vert-Vert,* obtained him no little celebrity in his generation. Vert-Vert was a parrot, who lived in clover in a convent at Nevers, and was famous for its pious utterances, but who picked up some naughty words when on its travels to another convent, to the great horror of the nuns, anxious to listen to its devout exclamations.

Charles Palissot de Montenoy,[2] generally known as Palissot, was, if not a personal enemy of Voltaire, at least very hostile to his friends and admirers; though indeed his pen was at the service of any great men who would accept his flattery and remunerate his services. He wrote a comedy, *Le Cercle,* in which he abused Jean-Jacques Rousseau in such a style as to disgust even those who held the latter most cheaply. He wrote offensive adulations of Voltaire until the latter gave him to understand that his attentions were not appreciated; and then he offered his pen to Fréron. His

[1] 1709-1777. [2] 1730-1814.

Little Letters on Great Philosophers, in which Diderot is fiercely attacked, are smart and entertaining, but manifestly insincere. His comedy *The Philosophers* (1760) was very successful. His *Dunciad* is a stupid and monotonous imitation of Pope's. To the literary student his name recalls nothing so vividly as a *bout-rimé*[1] which Marmontel made at his expense, and which sufficed to overwhelm him with ridicule.[2]

There were certain names that had the privilege of goading Voltaire to fury when they were mentioned; such was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's; other names he used as a grindingstone upon which he sharpened his teeth. Such were those of Patouillet,[3] Nonnotte,[4] and Angliviel de la Beaumelle.[5] The two former were ex-Jesuits; they had attacked Voltaire, and their names have been transmitted to us by Voltaire's revenge. This revenge was complete; never did he lose an opportunity

[1] For *bouts-rimés* see vol. ii. bk. iv. ch. vii. § 3.

[2] " Le poëte franc gaulois,
Gentilhomme Vendômois,
La gloire de sa bourgade,
Ronsard, sur son vieux hautbois,
Entonna la *Franciade.*
Sur sa trompette de bois,
Un moderne auteur maussade,
Pour lui faire paroli,[1]
Fredonna la *Dunciade.*
Cet homme avait nom Pali :
On dit d'abord Palis fade,
Puis Palis fou, Palis plat,
Palis froid et Palis fat ;
Pour couronner la tirade
En fin de turlupinade,
On rencontra le vrai mot :
On le nomma Palis sot.

Envoi.

M'abaissant jusqu' à toi, je joue avec le mot ;
Réfléchis, si tu peux, mais n'écris pas . . . lis, **sot.**"

[3] 1699-1779. [4] 1711-1793. [5] 1727-1773.

[1] *Faire paroli* is to stake the double of what was staked before.

of pouring his most scalding contempt over these luckless priests. In Angliviel de la Beaumelle Voltaire had a more serious and worthy detractor. He was a writer of considerable distinction; in many things he was far more liberal than even Voltaire. He and Voltaire met at Berlin; and it was there that the latter took offence at some of Beaumelle's opinions. Whether his hatred was justly or unjustly founded Voltaire was never known to forgive; and he silently pursued Angliviel with his satires, nay, with his insults and calumnies, up to the last day of his life. His enmity was not only expressed in writing; it is said on good authority that he was chiefly responsible for Angliviel's imprisonment in the Bastille. Voltaire was not the tenderest of men; if some of his contemporaries dealt hardly with him, he had his turn, and made the most of it.

The abbé Guyot Desfontaines,[1] whose name we have mentioned before, was another of Voltaire's "intimate" enemies. Their quarrels at one time attracted the attention of Europe. Voltaire in this case, it must be said, was right: Desfontaines was indebted to him for a very great service; he was imprisoned under an infamous charge, and it was Voltaire who obtained his release and saved him from certain disgrace and ruin. This kindness Desfontaines recognised by attacking his benefactor's works. The indignant Voltaire thereupon prepared his sharpest arms, rushed upon the unfortunate abbé, and although the latter at first offered some spirited resistance, he was eventually beaten down and annihilated. Desfontaines, be it said in passing, was anything but an ordinary man. He was clever as a polemist, and his translations of *Gulliver* and the *Æneid* are still held to be valuable works of their kind.

Another sworn adversary of Voltaire was Alexis Piron,[2] one of the second-rate playwrights of the eighteenth century;

[1] 1685-1745. [2] 1689-1773.

but who, being extremely witty, knew the weak points of Voltaire, and not unfrequently made him smart under the lash. Alexis Piron was the son of a Burgundian poet of some distinction. He was first noted for his *bons-mots*, which were extremely pungent. He then took to stage writing, and in two or three instances succeeded in producing plays of the highest quality. Such, for instance, was his comedy, the *Métromanie*. Piron became one of the *collaborateurs* of Le Sage; and they jointly produced for the Théâtre de la Foire numerous pieces, of which the titles have barely reached us.

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1. The Encyclopædists.

The object of an encyclopædia is to collect the erudition scattered over the face of the world, to expound its general system to the men with whom we live, and to hand it down to the men who shall come after us; so that the labours of past ages may not have been useless labours for the ages which succeed, that our descendants, becoming better informed, may at the same time become more virtuous and more happy, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race."

Such were the words of those who, about the middle of the eighteenth century, conceived the idea of the *Encyclopædia; a methodical (raisonné) "Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades."* A Parisian publisher, desiring to have a translation of Chambers's *Cyclopædia*,[1] applied to a young and comparatively unknown man, Denis Diderot,[2] to perform the labour. Diderot, full of spirit and ambition, was not satisfied with the dry and limited English work, and conceived the plan of one which should be somewhat similar in design, but vaster and more comprehensive. He opened his idea to d'Alembert,[3] young like himself, but already well known as a mathematician, who looked favourably on the scheme; and together they set themselves to the task. In 1746 they obtained their license to print; Diderot drew up the prospectus, d'Alembert wrote the plan of the work. Large numbers of subscribers supported an idea which promised to reflect such

[1] Published 1728. [2] 1713-1784. [3] 1717-1783.

great credit on the nation and the age. Many of the best writers of the day tendered assistance; Voltaire wrote several of the articles; Montesquieu and Buffon co-operated with the young editors; Malesherbes and Turgot lent their aid. Even the Jesuits, and the few Jansenists who still existed, offered to share in the toil; but their help was politely declined.[1] It would have been well if those responsible for the contents of the *Encyclopædia* had exercised discrimination amongst their friends as well as amongst their enemies; for the articles are very unequal, some of them being at once weak and declamatory — such, for instance, as the abbé Mallet's *Hell*, the effort of writing which, it has been maliciously said of him, he was not able to survive. Diderot, the editor, seems to be apologising for this unevenness, in his own article "Encyclopædia," when he says that such a work "could only be attempted in a philosophical age, because it demands throughout more boldness of spirit than one usually has in the pusillanimous ages of Taste." In religion a compromise was apparently made with orthodoxy; or, at all events, the religious articles are written with the same freedom on the orthodox side as on that of innovation. In philosophy, the English modern authorities are most in favour, Locke and Newton being preferred to Descartes; for Condillac had followed Voltaire in familiarising Frenchmen with the ideas of their neighbours. In the history of philosophy Diderot was himself the principal spokesman, until Voltaire came to his assistance after his return from Berlin; and he contrived, skilfully enough, to compensate for the freedom accorded to the literary abbés who wrote about religion.[2] Read what Diderot says on the score of Diogenes :—

[1] The Jesuits had a work of their own in the market, the *Dictionary of Trévoux*, and their object in undertaking to assist a rival speculation is perhaps open to a little curious surmise.

[2] There were four of these up to 1758. D'Alembert writes to Voltaire :— "The abbé Morellet is a fresh and excellent acquisition which we have made;

"So much we owe to truth and to the memory of this unclean but very virtuous philosopher. Little minds, animated by a base jealousy against all virtue which is not confined to their own sect, will be only too eager to tear to pieces the sages of antiquity, without our assisting them. Let us rather do what honour and philosophy require of us; let us protest against these imbecile talkers, and try to raise again, if possible, in our writings the monuments which gratitude and veneration had erected to the ancient philosophers, which time has destroyed, and the memory of which superstition would now abolish."

Allusions of this sort were not missed by the bigots of the eighteenth century; and one of them, Abraham Chaumeix, wrote eight volumes of *Legitimate Objections to the Encyclopædia.* In politics, Diderot and his associates were of the school inaugurated by the *Spirit of Laws,* only still more pronounced than Montesquieu in favour of popular sovereignty. They recognised the dignity of the citizen as compared with the courtier, defining the latter as belonging to "a kind of folk whom the misfortune of kings and peoples has set between kings and the truth, to prevent the latter from reaching them." In science, which d'Alembert made his peculiar care, the Encyclopædists were severely scientific, at the same time that they were clear and accurate, the articles on scientific subjects being copiously illustrated by woodcuts. In literature, Marmontel, Mallet, de Jaucourt, Dumarsais, and others, wrote according to their lights; that is, with little originality and no great spirit. The science of literary criticism was not yet mastered; and, if we except the grammatical articles of the last named and of Beauzée, the technical contributions of the *Encyclopædia* to the history and method of letters were inconsiderable. The opposition of those whose mouthpiece Chaumeix had made himself caused the revocation of the

he is the fourth theologian to whom we have had recourse since the commencement of the *Encyclopædia.* The first was excommunicated, the second exiled, the third is dead;"—and Morellet was put into the Bastille two years later.

permission to publish the gigantic work which was issued to the public. After a suspension of six years, between 1759 and 1765, it was continued, and brought to a conclusion in 1771; although a supplement of half-a-dozen volumes appeared six years later.

Diderot had to bear the brunt of the objections and jealousies which were aroused by the *Encyclopædia*. Marmontel, Condorcet, Morellet, lived to enter the Academy; Turgot and Malesherbes, after they had become ministers of France, found means to reward several of their former colleagues; but Diderot received no honour or reward for his pains. It was, perhaps, to a great extent, his own fault; he was not sufficiently prudent; and, having to bear on his own shoulders the odium contracted by each and all of his fellow-workers, he was too much out of favour with the authorities of court and church to obtain or expect reward. His life was devoted to his work; he survived it by less than fourteen years; and he died almost as poor as he had lived. His publisher, Lebreton, had made his fortune by the *Encyclopædia*, in spite of having substituted his own platitudes for many of the boldest and best expressions of his literary clients; but Diderot was in the meantime selling his books to Catherine of Russia in order to maintain himself. She left him the use of the library, and gave him, as her librarian, a salary of a thousand francs per year, for which she afterwards substituted a present of fifty thousand francs. He went to see her in Russia, and was well received; and after his return to Paris, when he was dying in his old humble quarters, Catherine insisted upon having him moved to grand apartments in the Rue Richelieu, where he only lived twelve days. This was almost the only gleam of prosperity which Diderot saw, in an age when literature certainly cannot be said to have generally gone without its reward. His life had been a chequered one, apart from the ingratitude of others; and it was not

always of others that he had to complain. He deserted his wife and daughter three years after his marriage; then he returned to them, covering himself with reproaches; and then took again another mistress. He quarrelled with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, after being on intimate terms with him;—which, indeed, may not have been attributable entirely to his own inconstancy. He played himself false, even with his pen, more than once or twice writing utterly beneath his powers; though he may have been unable at the moment to pay a better price for his bread and cheese. He wrote two poor dramas, *The Father of the Family* and *The Natural Son*, in which he painted all the sordidness of his own existence; an *Essay on Merit and Virtue*, his first work, which displays the weaknesses and the enthusiasm of a religious bigot; a *Letter on the Blind*, in which he is completely emancipated, and advocates the opposite side of what he maintained in his first essay, and which procured for him the honour of a sojourn at the castle of Vincennes; and a couple of volumes on the *Exhibitions of Pictures* (*Salons*) strung together in seventeen days for his friend Grimm, one of the most readable of his works. He was sixty when he wrote these sketches, which reveal a surprising artistic taste, a dash, vigour, and enthusiasm for ideal beauty that one would scarcely have expected from the editor of the *Encyclopædia*. Over the quaint and life-like interiors of his friend Greuze especially he goes into ecstasies, and evolves page after page of social philosophy from the text wherewith the canvas has supplied him. He also published two novels—*Jacques the Fatalist*, a series of tales and conversations between Jacques, his master, and the landlady of a public-house; and *The Nun*, which aims at depicting the evils of nunneries, but with an absolute disregard of common decency. The best work of his later days is an *Essay on the Reigns of Claudius and Nero*, filled with declamations and

digressions, and even containing a history of the quarrel between Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau; but which is no bad eulogium on Seneca.

D'Alembert,[1] "the man who wrote a preface," according to Gilbert, is known to us by still better titles than the preliminary discourse of the *Encyclopædia*, though that is sufficiently large and philosophic in its views to earn him a reputation. As a mathematician he has left his mark upon his age; as a writer he was, if not brilliant or ornate, at least sound and dignified. He had been trained in a hard school; circumstances and intellectual tendencies combined to make him, as he has been called, the Stoic of the eighteenth century. The son of Madame de Tencin and Destouches, an officer of artillery, he was heartlessly deserted, and in fact exposed to die on the steps of the church of Saint-Jean-le-Rond;[2] but he was given to nurse to a poor woman, whom he always persisted in regarding as his mother. In his autobiography he describes himself as "Jean le Rond d'Alembert, of the French Academy, the Academies of Science of Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, etc. etc., born at Paris on the 16th of November 1717, of parents who abandoned him at his birth." He never complained of the position to which nature seemed thus to have condemned him. Only once he gives expression to a feeling of cynical bitterness, when, after refusing the temptations held out to him by Frederick of Prussia and Catherine of Russia—the latter of whom offered him a salary of a hundred thousand francs as tutor to her son, he writes to Voltaire, "I shall remain in Paris; there I shall eat bread and nuts, there I shall die poor, but there also I shall live free. I shall practise geometry and read Tacitus. If you only knew how sweet a refuge for idleness this geometry is! And

[1] 1717-1783.

[2] Ten days after he was found his father, however, settled upon him twelve hundred francs a year.

then the fools do not read you, and consequently do not blame you, and do not praise you. Geometry is my wife, and I have established my household. M. de Maurepas (the minister) and Madame de Tencin have taught me how to do without place, fortune, and consideration." Consideration, however, he had in abundance. In 1772, eleven years before his death, he became permanent secretary of the French Academy.

D'Alembert's love-phase came late in life, and, consequently, with extraordinary vehemence. The object of his passion, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse,[1] played with him and deceived him; but she left him on her deathbed a manuscript in which she confessed her various preferences. Most of these seem to have possessed the merit of being ten years younger than the lady, but certainly none of them had the qualities of mind by which their rival was distinguished.[2] D'Alembert scarcely recovered from the effects of his loss, heightened as it was by the remembrance of the manner in which he had been duped by her in whom his full trust had been reposed. After he died there was found amongst his papers abundant evidence of the severity of his grief. His later years were spent almost entirely at the Academy, where he was highly respected, and fulfilled his often delicate duties with equal tact and success. Amongst his literary productions, his laborious articles in the *Encyclopædia* should not be omitted. That on *The Court* is marked throughout by a vein of irony, such as enters more or less into the style of most French prose-writers of the eighteenth century when treating of the moribund government and institutions of their country. But this was not the natural or the best style of d'Alembert, who is, above all things, solid, argumentative,

[1] 1732-1776.

[2] David Hume, in a letter to Gilbert Elliot, September 22, 1764, says :— "I went to see Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who is really one of the most sensible women of Paris." This lady's passion-breathing letters to her last lover, M. Guibert, have been lately published, edited by M. E. Asse.

and precise. A more characteristic article is the one on *Geneva*, which, amidst an able treatment of the reformed church and of its history, took occasion to suggest that the church of Geneva had, during the past two centuries, gradually deserted the principles of Calvin for those of Servetus, and to advise the republic, in all seriousness, to establish a national theatre, by way of softening the manners of its morose population. The article raised a storm, not only in Switzerland but in France. Rousseau, himself a Swiss, took up the cause of his countrymen in a *Letter to d'Alembert*, full of ardour and declamation; and to this d'Alembert replied in cool and measured terms. Voltaire also expostulated with his friend and colleague on behalf of his adopted country; but d'Alembert would not retract a word. The French Government, could scarcely have felt much genuine sympathy in the Swiss cause; but it made a pretext of the quarrel to give expression to its growing jealousy of the *Encyclopædia*, which, in fact, was soon afterwards deprived of its privilege, not, however, before d'Alembert had withdrawn from it rather than be found at issue with any of his colleagues on a matter of principle. His essay on the *Destruction of the Jesuits*, and on the *Society of Men of Letters and of the Great*, are both in his best style; the latter being an admirably spirited contribution to what I may perhaps venture to call the literature of literature.

Marmontel,[1] the son of humble parents, to whose sacrifices he owed a liberal education, reaped his first success in the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* at Toulouse. Having gained three prizes for poetry, he sent his verses to Voltaire, who thought well of them, and obtained employment for the young man in Paris. In 1748 he wrote *Denys the Tyrant*, a tragedy which was at once accepted. Mademoiselle Gaussin and Mademoiselle Clairon, two of the leading actresses of the time,

[1] 1723-1799.

fought for the rôle of Arétie, daughter of Dion, who reminds the reader of the Æmilia of *Cinna*. The piece succeeded, as did also *Aristomenes;* but *Cleopatra* was laughed off the stage, a fate which also befell the *Heraclides* and the *Funeral of Sesostris*. Meanwhile, Marmontel had already made many friends in the capital: from Madame de Pompadour to Madame de Tencin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; from men of the world like the duke de Choiseul, Bernis, and la Popelinière, to men of letters like Diderot, d'Holbach, Rousseau, and Grimm. In his earlier years, indeed, his social successes were greater than his literary successes. On one occasion, it is recorded in his own *Memoirs*, the king was "on the point of speaking to him;" and as reverence for the monarch was not incompatible in the men of the eighteenth century with a growing contempt for the monarchy, Marmontel could never forget the honour. He had given Louis a copy of his *Poétique française*, and the king, in order to reward him, presently granted him the privilege of issuing the *Mercure*, which was equivalent to a handsome income. Shortly afterwards he had experience of the danger to which the literary men of his age were especially liable. Suspected by the duke d'Aumont of writing some verses upon him, he was arrested and sent to the Bastille. Thence he emerged after eleven days' imprisonment as a thoroughly popular man. This was the period during which he wrote his best works; amongst them *Belisarius*, the *Incas*, and the *Moral Tales*, of which the morality is only in the title, were at once received into public favour. In 1763, upon the death of Bougainville, he was elected to the Academy. He also produced several operas, amongst others *Dido* and *Zemire and Azor*, and established his reputation as one of the most versatile writers of the century. General favourite as he was, he thoroughly identified himself with the new ideas; but the Revolution outstripped him, and in 1792 he was obliged to seek refuge

in Normandy. Here he died seven years later, leaving behind him a volume of *Memoirs* which are of considerable value for the social and literary history of his time.

Marmontel's works are not much read in the present day, and in fact they hardly deserve to be. The mark which he made on his century, if deep, was ephemeral; his ideas were light, and his ambitions not of the highest. The most philosophical of all his efforts, the moral and political romance of *Belisarius*, is vague, cold, and rather declamatory than powerful. That great general, whose eyes had been put out by order of the Emperor Justinian, wanders home, accompanied by a child who guides him, and scatters broadcast on his road his endless moral lessons. When he arrives at home, his wife dies of grief, but the old man continues his sermonising to young Tiberius, and even to the emperor himself, who comes to him incognito; he discourses about luxury, war, armies, the court, and, above all, on tolerance, like a philosopher of the eighteenth century and a pupil of Voltaire, with arguments such, as "Minds are not enlightened by the flames of the stake;" "The only point about which all parties are agreed is, that not one understands anything about what it dares to decide." Finally, the emperor is made a prisoner by the Bulgarians, and is delivered by Belisarius. He recognises his errors, and his heir marries Belisarius' daughter. The Sorbonne attacked and condemned the book, Voltaire defended it wittily. Many of the highest-placed personages of different states complimented Marmontel; Catherine of Russia had it translated into Russian for the edification of her subjects, who most probably, even if they could read, could not have understood it. Marmontel collected also the literary articles which he had published in the *Encyclopædia*, and which appeared as *Elements of Literature;* but there is very little that is either startling, new, or well told to be found in them. Two years before Marmontel's death he wrote a *Memoir*, to plead for the

free exercise of the Roman Catholic worship, then forbidden. "Thirty years after the publication of *Belisarius*, Marmontel became the advocate of those who had censured his work. Such an action redeems many faults of style."[1]

The tendency to materialism, if not the actual enunciation of the theory, so manifestly displayed in the writings of Diderot, was still more apparent in those of the less powerful and less eloquent Helvétius,[2] who composed an essay on *Mind*, for the express purpose of proving that matter was the only absolute existence. The transitory success of the book was due principally to the excitement of those who were scandalised by it. Rousseau was on the point of controverting so much of argument as Helvétius had addressed to the support of his thesis, when the Sorbonne unfortunately interfered with its merely *ex cathedrâ* refutation, and he held his hand. Unfortunately, I say ; because it would have been interesting to see how the great sentimentalist would have met the reasoning of Helvétius. The latter, and his friend the Baron d'Holbach,[3] from whose house their works were clandestinely issued, denied the necessity of assuming an immaterial force external to the bodily organs of man. Intelligence seemed to them to supply a spring of action sufficient to account for all the phenomena of thought ; or at all events no larger assumptions were made in order to bridge over the difficulties of their theory than were needed by those who maintained the existence of something beyond and above matter, and utterly foreign to the domain of human experience. The position is a strong one, enabling the besieged to turn against their enemies all the most powerful of their shafts ; and it has the great advantage of being founded upon phenomena, and of being assailable only by assumptions.

These bold doctrines were of course strenuously opposed

[1] Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 420.
[2] 1715-1771. [3] 1723-1789.

by the majority of contemporary writers, although they were widely accepted amongst a large class of intelligent Frenchmen; and to this the high personal qualities of their enunciators contributed not a little. The same thing is true, in another sense, of Condillac [1] and his disciples. Condillac outdid Locke in the distinctness with which he referred all human powers to the influence of sensations upon a mind originally void of ideas. Given a receptive mind, possessing, if not rudimentary faculties, yet at all events consciousness and conceptivity; nothing more was needed, according to Condillac, to explain all the results of the ripened intellect than the innumerable seeds of sensational phenomena, germinating from the very moment of our birth. His followers, it is true, carried his theory beyond the point where he himself left off, and differ in little more than temperament from the cold materialism of d'Holbach.

Another collaborator of d'Alembert and Diderot on the *Encyclopædia* deserves a slight mention, the Marquis de Saint Lambert.[2] He was a favourite with Voltaire, which did not prevent him from ousting the latter out of the affections of Madame du Châtelet. He wrote a descriptive poem on the *Seasons*, after the manner of Thomson, as well as a number of smaller poems and fables, which were praised by his friends, and are now deservedly forgotten.

§ 2. The Moralists.

Amongst the moralists of the eighteenth century who stood upon the ancient ways, and who continued, or rather ended, the line marked out by Pascal and la Bruyère, was Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues,[3] born of a noble family

[1] 1715-1780. [2] 1716-1803. [3] 1715-1747.

of Provence, in the year of Louis XIV.'s death. Dying at the age of thirty-two, he can hardly be said to have displayed his talents at their ripest, but, for all that, his life was a full one, and he wrote much. It was little more than two years before his death when he resigned his commission in the army, so that his literary work was but the fruit of the well employed leisure of an active man. He served in the Italian campaign of 1734, and in the Bohemian campaign of 1741-1742; but he had already acquired a reputation by his writings before ill-health compelled him to quit the service. Voltaire had been attracted by the good qualities displayed by the young marquis in his earliest attempts, and an interesting correspondence between the two remains to attest the warmth of their friendship. Vauvenargues was a literary critic of some acumen, though his judgments are not always such as have been confirmed by posterity. He has left behind him, in addition to his letters, a small volume of *Critical Reflections on several Poets*, and a number of *Imaginary Conversations*—between Pascal and Fénelon, Charron and Montaigne, Molière and a young man, Racine and Bossuet, and the like. His *Characters*, somewhat after the manner of la Bruyère,[1] no doubt suggested by la Rochefoucauld,[2] though without the latter's heartless cynicism, are piquant and often striking. Commonplace abounds, it must be confessed; but when no page is without its gem, we can afford the labour of sifting. There is point, and even wit, in much of Vauvenargues' wordiness; but his distinguishing features are gentleness, moderation, a belief in human nature, and in his own power to show it at its best.

Another of the later moralists, Duclos,[3] though somewhat older than Vauvenargues, was yet in a sense his pupil; for his mind ripened more slowly, and he lived a quarter of a

[1] See vol. ii. bk. v. ch. iv. § 2. [2] *Ibidem.* See bk. v. ch. ii. § 1.
[3] 1704-1772.

century after the other. His principal work was a volume of *Considerations on the Manners of the Age*, which was translated into English and Dutch during the life of the author. He also wrote a *History of Louis XI.*, "a work," according to Daguesseau, "written to-day with the learning of yesterday." When Voltaire accepted the invitation of Frederick of Prussia, the post of historiographer-royal thus vacated was given to Duclos, who earned its emoluments by writing the *Secret Memoirs of the Reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.*—personal reflections which did not give entire satisfaction to the authorities; and in 1766 he was advised to spend a few years out of France. He had previously been elected a member of the Academy; and on his return from Italy he was appointed its perpetual secretary. His literary ambition was great, and so was his success amongst his contemporaries; but posterity has somewhat detracted from his earlier repute. Beauzée,[1] who succeeded him at the Academy, pronounced his panegyric in high terms: Rousseau called him *un homme droit et adroit:* d'Alembert declared that he gave utterance to more wit in a certain time than any man he knew; but the present generation merely says that he is just readable, and that he is remarkably unequal both in matter and in style.

A rhetorician and a moralist who partly succeeded in reviving the manner of the Augustan classicism of France, a man who preserved the purity and loftiness of his ideas amidst the overflowing license of the eighteenth century, was Antoine Léonard Thomas,[2] who wrote a number of *Eloges* in a style of florid, rather declamatory, and yet elevated eloquence. If he is still read, it is more from curiosity than with zest; for he is a rhetorician pure and simple, and rarely rises to the height of philosophy. A pupil of the Jesuits, he had received a more liberal preparation for the world than was usual in that Society so long as the panegyrics of the "Grand Monarque" formed

[1] 1717-1789. [2] 1732-1785.

the staple of its historical teaching. He knew his age, but he was hardly of it; and in fact he is at his best on such topics as the eulogy of *Marcus Aurelius,* or at all events on some such work as the magnification of Peter the Great, in the *Pétréide.* Nothing is small to Thomas; he seems to imagine himself speaking in letters of gold; and the effect is wont to approach dangerously near the ludicrous. He was thoroughly out of his element in the eighteenth century, to which his stiff and ornate periods were not suited; and it must be admitted that he had not the force of genius, or even the gift of expression, necessary to take his fellow-countrymen by storm.

§ 3. Buffon.

The step from metaphysical to physical science is a long and difficult one to take. The world's dogmas and theories have naturally been formulated with the greatest confidence, and have been most secure from contradiction or refutation, in those branches of human knowledge whose phenomena come less clearly before the eye of the multitude. The subject-matter of physics is within every man's reach, and it is dangerous for a half-instructed *savant* to lay down general maxims and to deduce universal laws which might be any day refuted by the accidental observation of the most ignorant. But in metaphysics every one can assert and assume, and no man—or only one in a hundred thousand—can conclusively prove the assumption to be wrong. Hence there were many great metaphysicians before there was a single great physicist; a whole library of ethical and mental science before one trustworthy book on natural history. The last century has done more for the science of matter than the previous thousand years had done for the science of mind;

and the naturalist of the eighteenth century must not be judged after the standard of the nineteenth. Measured by the Owens and the Huxleys of to-day, Buffon is little more than a pioneer in the most popular fields of natural history; but, measured by the condition of natural science amongst his contemporaries, he was a *savant* of the highest order.

George-Louis Leclerc, count de Buffon,[1] born at Montbard in the Côte d'Or, applied himself at an early age to the study of science, and of mathematics in particular; but when, in 1739, he was appointed superintendent of the royal gardens at Paris, his attention was at once directed to the channel in which his whole after life was to flow. For ten years he devoted himself to the phenomena of organised life, observing, compiling, and collecting; and then he published the first part of the *Natural History* which he had conceived, but which he was not destined fully to accomplish. The whole reading world at once welcomed this fascinating narrative of the wonders and beauties of nature, which opened up so many and so grand vistas of novel interest. Buffon was already a member of the Academy of Sciences when the French Academy elected him unsolicited, at their next vacancy, in 1753; it was upon the occasion of the issue of his *History* that the king created him a count. Voltaire, who began by laughing at him, ended by doing him justice; Jean-Jacques Rousseau admired both his matter and his style.[2] The Encyclopædists, on the other hand, who at first courted his assistance, discovered that he was too little in harmony with their advanced philosophic views; and the connection terminated. The fame of the naturalist spread throughout Europe. An English privateer, having captured a vessel in which were a number of chests of specimens addressed to Buffon, scrupulously forwarded them to Paris. During his lifetime a statue was

[1] 1707-1788.

[2] He said, "C'est la plus belle plume du siècle."

raised to him in the hall of the Museum of Natural History, with this motto on the pedestal: *Naturam amplectitur omnem*, He embraces all nature.[1]

Buffon was, in fact, anything but a philosopher of the Encyclopædic order. A man neither of the future nor of the past, but of the present, he was happy in his generation, because he had chosen a career in which there was no strife, which roused no jealousies amongst those who were powerful enough to hurt him, and which enabled him to live a life of peaceful and congenial labour. His very labour was not hard, save in the overwhelming abundance of his materials. He did not attempt to classify, scarcely even to generalise; his aim was merely to describe, and to evolve from what he saw the grandeur, the beauty, and the harmonies of nature. He possessed an excellent style; and it is this, indeed, which gives to his writings their greatest charm. His *Discourse on Universal History* was accepted as a model of writing; and d'Alembert, if he said that Buffon was merely "the king of phrases," at least admitted that he was that. But he was that and something more. He produced before his death a *Theory of the Earth*, the *Epochs of Nature*,[2] and a *History of Minerals*. In his survey of natural history, properly so called, he completed the descriptions of man, of quadrupeds, and of the birds. If he had not done more, it was because he had no more time; but he did enough to show that, according to his light, he had at all events faced

[1] Whereunder a wit wrote: "He who embraces too much grasps too loosely." The hint was taken, and the motto changed to *Majestati naturæ par ingenium.*"

[2] He had, of course, many *collaborateurs;* and one of them, Guéneau de Montbelliard, wrote of him:

"O jour heureux qui vis naître Buffon,
Tu seras à jamais chez la race future
Pour les amis du vrai, du beau, de la raison,
Une époque de la nature."

and attempted the conquest of a difficult domain of human knowledge.

Let us see what claim Buffon has to be considered as a man of science. Perhaps it would be more just to say that Buffon conceived ten thousand sciences, each one limited to the visible features and characteristics of an individual animal. His work was done when he had described the man, the tiger, the cat; not only did he not attempt to discover their respective positions in the scale of nature, but he did not believe that any order existed amongst them of which the human mind need take cognisance. "Races, orders, and classes," he says, "exist only in imagination. . . . It is more easy, more agreeable, and more useful to consider things by their relations with ourselves than in any other point of view." Look at his classification of the quadrupeds. It begins with the horse, goes on to the ass, includes the ox, the sheep, the pig, and the dog. In another class the stag and the hare come side by side. Low down, apparently disgraced because of the cruelty of their instincts, we find the carnivorous animals. One day a friend proposed to him to verify a theory by having recourse to a crucible. "The mind," he replied, "is the best crucible." In botany, the labours of Linnæus appeared to him as so much dry chaff, out of which nothing was to be gained, and he excluded the Swede's classification from the royal gardens.[1]

Manifestly Buffon's contribution to natural science, which stops short at the description of individuals, is of the most meagre kind. For the sake of his style we may perhaps forgive him the vanity which induced him to think that the world had nothing more to learn about a plant or an animal except what the Count de Buffon could tell it.

[1] Linnæus took his revenge by giving the name of *Buffonnia* to an ugly and malodorous flower.

CHAPTER V.

§ 1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[1] of whom we have already heard something, and without frequent mention of whom the literary annals of the eighteenth century could not be written, occupies in the history of the great revolution of French ideas the same position as a social innovator and reformer that Voltaire occupies as an intellectual innovator, and that Turgot and Necker occupy as political innovators. More than either of these he represents that spirit of liberty tending to license, of enthusiasm tending to super-exaltation, of courage tending to excess, which marks all the great minds of his epoch, and which was destined, like a powerful leaven, to regenerate humanity by first revolutionising society. In this work Rousseau was before all his contemporaries; more influential and effective than Montesquieu, than Diderot, and even than Voltaire. By his strong individuality, by his vivid conceptions, by his bold and picturesque ideas, by his close fidelity to nature, he stamped his impressions deeply in the plastic hearts of his countrymen and countrywomen, invading every rank and grade of the social scale, from the throne to the hovel, from the drawing-room and the cabinet to the *café* and the working-man's club. The effect of his direct appeal to natural conditions upon the unnatural and artificial society of the age was immediate and remarkable. "His sallies,

[1] 1712-1778.

his sarcasms, the harsh things of every kind which he addresses to the great, to men of fashion, to women ; his stern and cutting tone, shock but do not annoy. On the contrary, after so many compliments, insipidities, and poetical triflings, all this re-excites the blunted taste ; it is the sensation of a strong, rough wine, after a long indulgence in orgeat and candied citron. Thus his first discourse against art and letters had at once a very great success. But his pastorals touch the heart more deeply than his satires. If men listen to the scolding of the moralist, they throng around the magician who charms them ; women, above all, and young men, are devoted to him who lets them see the promised land. The whole accumulation of discontent, weariness of their present condition, *ennui*, vague disgust, a multitude of suppressed desires, gush out like subterranean springs of water, under the borings that for the first time bring them to light. These borings Rousseau struck deep and true, by good luck and through his genius. . . . What an outlet for restrained faculties, for the suppressed faculties, for the large and rich well-spring ever bubbling in the breast of man, and for which this pretty world has provided no issue ! A lady of the Court has been brought into contact with love as it was then carried on, a mere question of taste, often only a pastime, pure gallantry, of which the exquisite polish ill conceals its shallowness, its coldness, and occasionally its wickedness : in short, such adventures, amusements, and characters as Crébillon the younger describes. One evening, as she is about to set out for the opera ball, she finds the *Nouvelle Héloïse* on her toilet-table ; it is not surprising that she keeps her horses and footmen waiting from hour to hour, and that, at four o'clock in the morning, she orders the horses to be unharnessed, and passes the remainder of the night in reading, choked with tears. For the first time in her life she finds a man who loves. And so, if you would understand the success of *Emile*, think of . . . the little

gentlemen embroidered, covered with gilt, tricked out, powdered, decked with sword and belt, their hats under their arms, bowing, offering to shake hands, rehearsing fine attitudes before a mirror, repeating phrases which they have learned by heart, pretty mannikins in whom everything is the work of the tailor, the hairdresser, the tutor, and the dancing-master; and by their side, little ladies, six years old, still more made-up, cased in whalebone, trapped in a heavy panier stuffed with hair and bound with iron, muffled in a head-dress two feet high, regular rouged dolls, whose mothers amuse themselves with them for a quarter of an hour every morning, to leave them to the maids for the rest of the day. These mothers rise from the perusal of *Emile*. No wonder if they immediately strip the poor little things, and resolve to nurse their next children themselves."[1] Such were the effects produced by Rousseau upon the fashionable world. Judge how he must have affected others, whose minds were already open to the new influences of the eighteenth century.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva. His mother died early; his father, a poor watchmaker, was descended from one of the French exiles who, in the earlier persecutions of the reformed church, fled for an asylum to the hospitable republican city; but he scarcely preserved the stern and uncompromising Calvinism of his ancestors, and seems to have been a man fond of pleasures, and caring little for his children. Jean-Jacques was, as a child, naturally shy and morose, feeble in body, but morbidly active in mind. He devoured all the books on which he could lay his hands, and derived from each the same lesson, the comparative worthlessness of arts and sciences, the absolute dignity and excellence of nature, the essential superiority of humanity to human society, and, in particular, the meanness and worthlessness of society as it then existed in France. He left,

[1] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. iv. ch. 1. § iv.

when very young, his parents and his master, an engraver; wandered about; changed his religion; became a lackey; and, finally, a hanger-on to Madame de Warens, a lady who had abandoned her husband, her religion, and all ordinary notions of morality. In 1740 we find him acting in the capacity of a tutor at Lyons; subsequently, by the patronage of a friend, he became secretary to the embassy at Venice, and, later, a clerk in the office of a farmer-general of taxes in Paris. This post he relinquished in order to devote himself to what he felt to be his true vocation—that of a man of letters, or rather of a prophet penetrated by the belief that the one cure needed to restore the human kind to health was a recourse to the primitive lessons of nature. Be it observed, however, that throughout his life, amidst the infinite variety of his ideas, theories, and intellectual excesses, the Calvinist's son remained a genuinely religious man, to whom communion with the Deity was a constant necessity, who arrived at many of the conclusions of Voltaire and Diderot by methods widely different from theirs,[1] but who was far from being in harmony with the sceptical spirit of the age. Undoubtedly Rousseau was a fanatic in his creed, not orthodox according to any other man's conception of religious faith and duty; but he was genuine in his belief and simple in his sentimentalism; and this was precisely what the eighteenth century needed in its apostles.[2]

It was a character and a talent out of which much might have been made; but the education of Rousseau had been pitiably imperfect, and his reading, if it had been copious, had been chaotic. He tells us that, as soon as he could read, his

[1] Methods such as Pascal had in mind, when he said that "the heart has its reasonings which the reason does not recognise."

[2] Mr. John Morley in his review of Taines' *Ancien régime* (*Fortnightly Review*, March 1876) says: "Rousseau was a Protestant; he was a native of the very capital and mother city of Protestantism, militant and democratic; and he was penetrated to his heart's core by the political ideas which had arisen in Europe at the Reformation."

father put novels in his hands, and read them page for page with himself. "Sometimes he (the father) heard the swallows in the morning, and said, 'Let us go to bed; I am more a child than yourself.'" And of the effect of this indiscriminate reading he says: "Thus began to be formed within me that heart, at once so proud and so tender, that effeminate but yet indomitable character which, ever oscillating between weakness and courage, between indulgence and virtue, has to the last placed me in contradiction with myself, and has brought it to pass that abstinence and enjoyment, pleasure and wisdom, have alike eluded me." So speaks the man of the boy of fifteen; and he speaks with an intimate knowledge of himself—a knowledge which he had made the constant aim of life. It is, in fact, from his own *Confessions* that we obtain most of what we know concerning his life—the bad as well as the good, and perhaps the bad even more than the good. In this remarkable book, full of obscene passages, the last portion whereof was written when he was about fifty-six years old, nothing whatever is concealed; and if we seem to hear too much of Rousseau from Rousseau, we remember that this candour and minuteness is an integral part of the man's nature and profession, which he displays himself only as he commends it to others. Listen to the best that he has to say on his own behalf, speaking of this very book of *Confessions:*—

"Let the last trumpet sound when it will, I shall come, with this book in my hand, before the sovereign Judge. I shall say openly: Here is what I have done, what I have thought, what I was. . . . I have shown myself as I have been, despicable and vile when I was so; good, generous, and sublime when I was that. I have uncovered my inner man, as Thou, eternal Being, thyself hast seen it. Gather around me the countless multitude of my fellow-creatures; let them hear my confessions, let them bemoan my unworthiness, let them blush at my miseries. Let each of them in turn uncover his heart at the foot of thy throne, with

the like sincerity; and then let one but say to Thee, if he dares: 'I was better than that man."

The more commonplace record of his life, from the day when, in his thirtieth year, he came to Paris with fifteen louis and his comedy of *Narcisse* in his pocket, until the day when he died amidst the regrets of his adopted country, will not take long to recite. Received at once into the society of young men whom Dupin, d'Epernay, and other members of the new school of financiers loved to patronise, he made the acquaintance of Diderot, of Grimm, of d'Holbach, and Saint-Lambert. He led the life of a true Bohemian; but he was not long in obtaining the fame which he coveted. The academy of Dijon had offered a prize for the best treatise on the question: "If the re-establishment of sciences and arts has contributed to render morals more pure?" Rousseau tells us that he was on his way to visit Diderot in his prison at Vincennes, and had taken with him a copy of the *Mercure de France*, in which the announcement met his eye. "If ever anything," he says, "seemed like a sudden inspiration, it was the emotion produced by reading this. I suddenly felt my mind dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of vivid ideas presented themselves at once with a force and confusion which cast me into an inexplicable agitation; I felt my head affected by giddiness like intoxication. . . . All that I could retain of these crowds of grand truths which, in a quarter of an hour, flashed upon me under that tree, has been very feebly scattered over my three principal works." He treated the question—it is alleged upon the suggestion of Diderot—from a negative point of view, and laboured to prove that arts, sciences, and letters had done more harm to mankind than was generally thought; that they gave to nations "the outward appearance of all virtues without possessing any;" that "the vile and deceitful uniformity of manners" prevents people "from showing themselves as they really are;" and

that "hatred and treachery will be continually hidden under the uniform and perfidious veil of politeness." He tries further to prove "that depravity becomes real and souls become corrupted according as sciences and arts have advanced towards perfection," [1] and cites the examples of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Turkey, and China, to prove his case, and those of the early Persians, the Scythians, the Germans, the first Romans, and the Swiss,[2] to prove the contrary. He contrasts Sparta and Athens, quotes Socrates to prove that the scholars and artists of his time were conceited about what they knew, says that Cato thundered against the Greek philosophers and orators who introduced themselves into Rome; and mentions Fabricius telling the Romans "to overturn the amphitheatres, smash the statues, burn the pictures, drive away the slaves who corrupt them," in order to regain "the only talent worthy of Rome, namely, to conquer the world and to make virtue reign on earth." In the second part of his *Discourse* Rousseau says that "sciences and arts owe their origin to our vices;" for "astronomy has arisen from superstition; eloquence from ambition, hatred, flattery, and falsehood; geometry from avarice; physics from vain curiosity; all, and even morality, from human pride;" that sciences are vain in the object which they propose to themselves, and still more dangerous in the effects which they produce; that they are bred in idleness, and nourish it; that they undermine the foundations of belief, and destroy virtue. As regards literature and

[1] Honoré de Balzac in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine* says: "Man is neither good nor bad; he is born with instincts and aptitudes; society, far from depraving him, as Rousseau pretended, makes him more perfect and better; but interest develops also his bad inclinations. Christianity, and above all Catholicism, being . . . a complete system of repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the greatest element of social order."

[2] J. J. Rousseau does not name the Swiss, but I suppose he means them by these words: "Telle enfin s'est montrée, jusqu'à nos jours cette nation rustique si vantée pour son courage que l'adversité n'a pu abattre, et pour sa fidélité que l'exemple n'a pu corrompre."

arts, they produce still worse evils; amongst others luxury, born of idleness and vanity, and "diametrically opposed to sound morality;" "dissolute morals, a necessary consequence of luxury, will be followed by a corruption of taste;" "true courage will become enervated, military virtues cease, and moral qualities diminish." "All these abuses arise because people ask no longer if a man is honest, but if he has talents; not if a book is useful, but if it is well written;" so that there are "natural philosophers, geometricians, chemists, astronomers, poets, musicians, painters; but no longer citizens." After some praise bestowed upon Louis XIV. and his successors for the establishment of academies, "which serve at least to bridle literary men," and a furious attack on philosophers, printing, and vulgarisers of science—which does not mean the Bacons, the Descartes, and the Newtons, he suggests that kings should admit to their counsels those who are the best able to give them good advice, tells ordinary people simply to do their duty, for there is no need to know more, invokes virtue, and ends thus: "Without envying the glory of these celebrated men who immortalise themselves in the republic of letters, let us endeavour to place between them and us that glorious distinction which was formerly observed between two great nations, that the one knew how to speak well, and the other how to act well."

The academy of Dijon crowned Rousseau's treatise,[1] and he found himself famous. Some time afterwards they proposed a further question: "What is the origin of the inequality amongst men, and is it authorised by natural law?" Encouraged by the notoriety which had resulted from the reply elicited to their previous question, they invited Rousseau to write upon this occasion also. He did it in a discourse which contains many of his best and most characteristic thoughts; but his ideas were so bold and so novel that the

[1] 1750.

judges dared not crown his work, and they gave the barren honour to a certain abbé Talbert. The first of these academic discourses, and an opera entitled *Le Devin du Village*, played at court, at once raised Rousseau to an honourable notoriety. King Stanislas of Poland and several others wrote a rejoinder to his attack upon the arts and sciences; Voltaire went about asking his friends where the new man had come from; the literary society of Paris opened its arms to him, and he was welcomed as a champion of the enlightened age. For Diderot he wrote in the *Encyclopædia* an article on *Political Economy*, afterwards published in a separate form in Geneva, where his works soon became popular. From 1755 to 1765 he wrote steadily and at his best. It was in this decade that he gave to the world his *Emile*, his *Social Contract*, *Julie or the New Héloïse*, his *Letters* to d'Alembert and to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, his *Letters from the Mountain*, and the first part of his *Confessions*. By these he attained the height of his fame; the three first mentioned, together with the last, are and deserve to be the best known of all his productions, and had the greatest influence upon his contemporaries.

Rousseau dwelt for a short period at Neufchâtel; but he was not allowed to remain in peace there. In 1762 the Parliament of Paris formally condemned *Emile*. This was on the 9th of June; and on the 18th of the same month the "*magnifique conseil*" of Geneva was sufficiently hypocritical to imitate the example, although not a single copy of the work thus stigmatised had yet reached the town. The council went farther, and issued a warrant for Rousseau's arrest, contrary to the laws of the republic, which required that an accused author should first be heard in his defence. For the next six years Rousseau was involved in troubles arising out of the hasty injustice of the proceedings taken against him. He fled from France to Switzerland, from Yverdun to Motiers-Travers, and thence to the

island of Saint-Pierre in the midst of the lake of Bienne ; and it was from Motiers-Travers that he wrote his *Letters from the Mountain*, in rejoinder to certain *Letters from the Country*, in which he had been personally attacked. In these he asseverated the principles already put forth in *Emile ;* and his book was burned by the executioner. In 1765, driven from Bienne, he betook himself to Strasbourg, where he was well received ; and though he might have lived here without annoyance, or might, if he had wished, have availed himself of more than one invitation from abroad—amongst others from David Hume in England—he went back to Paris at the end of the year. Whilst at Motiers-Travers the Marshal de Luxembourg had sent him an Armenian's dress, which he wore until he came to the capital ; dispensing with it, according to a spiteful suggestion of Marmontel, because it failed to attract sufficient attention. In Paris he was fêted and run after more than ever ; but he presently received a hint to depart. He had been staying at the house of the Prince de Conti, where he met Hume and Horace Walpole ; the latter of whom was attracted to Paris by his attachment to the marchioness du Deffand. Walpole and his friend conceived a poor opinion of Rousseau. Hume at least professed himself in a contrary sense, and had already arranged to take Rousseau back with him to England ; but he did not deny himself the pleasure of making a jest of the eccentricities of his friend.[1] In England Rousseau soon tired of the lionising to which he was subjected. He lived a retired life at Chiswick ; and whilst there he was induced to go to the theatre, in order to give George III. and the Queen an opportunity of seeing him.[2] After a visit to Wales, where he was offered an asylum by one of his hospitable friends, he accepted the use of a country

[1] Musset Pathay, *Œuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau* (1828), vol. v. p. 216. David Hume was at that time private secretary to the Marquis of Hertford.

[2] *Private Correspondence of David Hume*, London, 1820. Letter to the Marchioness de Barbantane, February 16, 1766.

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house at Wootton, in Derbyshire, the property of Mr. Davenport; who, to avoid giving offence to Rousseau's sensitive mind, charged him a rent of thirty pounds a year. Writing from Wootton to his friend Madame de Boufflers (April 5, 1766), he says: "I am never less bored or idle than when I am alone. There remains to me, together with the amusement of botanising, a very pleasant occupation, to which I love more and more to devote myself every day. I have here a man of my acquaintance whom I have a great desire to know better. The association which I am about to form with him will prevent me from desiring any other. I esteem him sufficiently not to fear the intimacy to which he invites me; and as he is as much ill-treated by mankind as myself, we will mutually console each other for insults received, by reading each in the heart of his friend that he has not deserved them." This "man of his acquaintance" was Rousseau himself; and it was in his peaceful retreat at Wootton that he wrote the first six books of his *Confessions*.[1]

One can hardly be surprised that Jean-Jacques, in the morbid condition which produced his *Confessions*, should have quarrelled with Hume. Into the causes and circumstances of this quarrel there is no need to enter. The majority of French men of letters took part against their countryman; d'Alembert and Voltaire in particular. The lack of generosity and sincerity in Hume's treatment of Rousseau is no less unquestionable than the exaggerated character of Rousseau's suspicions of his former friend.[2] Most probably it was not this quarrel, but the contrivance of Thérèse Levasseur, to whom Rousseau had remained faithful without the conven-

[1] The first part of the *Confessions* was not published until 1781; the second, written at Trye, or in the Dauphiné, did not see the light until 1788.

[2] In the *Private Correspondence of David Hume*, London, 1820, Hume in a letter to the Countess de Boufflers, August 12, 1766, admits that he had written to Baron d'Holbach, but "little imagined that a private story, told to a private gentleman, could run over a whole kingdom in a moment."

tional bond of matrimony, and who was intensely wearied of her banishment from France, that caused his departure from Wootton and from England in something under seventeen months. Then he lived for some time at Amiens, with Gresset, author of the poem of *Vert-Vert;* and from thence removed to Trye, a castle of the Prince of Conti's, near Gisors, where he passed under the assumed name of Renou. Meanwhile his friends in Geneva had not been idle; and in 1768 the magistrates of that city rescinded their old warrant; but Rousseau did not return to his native land. After remaining for some time at Trye he travelled from place to place, and finally came once more to Paris, having, in the meanwhile, finished his *Confessions;* a few pages whereof he read before an audience consisting of the count and countess of Egmont, Prince Pignatelli, the marchioness de Mesme, and the marquis de Juigné. Madame d'Epinay wrote to M. de Sartines, the minister of police, complaining that the *Confessions* compromised her; and Rousseau consented to read no more of them.

Rousseau was too little in harmony with his surroundings in the capital, and too genuine in his antipathy to the artificial side of existence, to remain long content with the part of "Parisian gentleman" which he had consented for a time to assume. He himself tells us with what a sense of relief he threw aside, before his greatest works had been written, the ridiculous costume of the "petit-maître," with its sword, its fine linen, its sleeves and ruffles. He put on the dress of an artisan, he set himself at independence with the world, reducing his necessities and his expectations to the minimum, in order to raise his powers to the maximum. By way of earning bread and cheese, he copied music at so much a sheet; he closed his door to the idlers and the curious, to his former friends and his former patrons and patronesses. He bade adieu to the philosophers with greater pleasure than to any others; for, as I have said, his sympathy with them

had never been great, and he despised their methods as much as he shrank from their coldness and self-sufficiency. They had oppressed him long enough, and his *Letter to d'Alembert* was at once his resignation as an encyclopædist and a declaration of war.[1] Judge how the effect of his writings must have been increased by this utter repudiation of what he, in common with so many others, felt and professed to be a false position, but which he almost alone had the courage to renounce.

During the last years of his life Rousseau wrote little else except his voluminous correspondence. In 1772, however, he published his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, in the course whereof he advised the Poles "to contract their boundaries, for their neighbours might perhaps think of rendering them that service." Within four months the partition of that kingdom was an accomplished fact. A volume of *Dialogues*, and another of *Rêveries*, were the last of his published works. He died in 1778, at the age of sixty-six, not without suspicion of having himself contributed to his release.

Rousseau's life was that of a genius beyond dispute, if not beyond detraction. He had more enemies than any of his contemporaries, and he possibly deserved to have them. He was self-involved, often morosely jealous and suspicious, exacting more than his indifference would suffer him to repay; but at the same time there was no literary man of his age who made more friends, or retained them for a longer time. This, no doubt, was because he was judged differently from other men. He was cast in a mould wholly in contrast with that of d'Alembert, of Voltaire, or any of the men of the eighteenth century with whom we could compare him. He was before all things a sentimentalist; he would have called himself a child of nature, and he was, in fact, the very opposite of an artificial man. How far his aversion to mere conventionalism was carried out, and to what length his candour

[1] Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 226.

sufficed to lead him, we may judge from the earlier chapters of his *Confessions*, in which he boasts of having shown himself such as he really was. The pages in which he describes his vileness are as filthy and disgusting as they well can be; and though many parts of the *Confessions* are delightful reading, yet there is too much special reasoning and too much talk of "sensibility" to make them wholly entertaining. The style in which they are written is simple, clear, and often natural. Read the following charming passage, and try to forget for a moment who "Mama" was.

"Dinners on the grass, at Montagnole, suppers in the arbour, the gathering in of the fruits, the vintage, the evenings passed with our people in stripping hemp, all these things were for us so many feasts, in which mama took the same pleasure as I did. More solitary walks possessed a greater charm still, because the feelings vent themselves more freely. We took one amongst others, which forms an era in my memory, on the day of Saint-Louis, after whom mama was named. We set out together and alone, early in the morning, after having heard mass which a Carmelite friar had come to say for us at the break of day in a chapel adjoining the house. I had proposed that we should go and visit the other side of the spot where we were, and which we had not yet visited. We had sent our provisions beforehand, for the walk was to last the whole day. Mama, though a trifle buxom and stout, was no bad walker; we went from hill to hill, and from wood to wood, sometimes in the sun and sometimes in the shade, resting from time to time, and forgetting ourselves during entire hours; talking of ourselves, of our union, of our charming lot, and uttering prayers for its duration which were not granted. Everything seemed to concur to make this day a happy one. It had rained a short time ago; there was no dust, and there were sparkling brooks; a slight breeze stirred the leaves, the air was pure, the horizon without clouds, serenity reigned in the heavens as well as in our hearts. We took our dinner at a peasant's, and shared it with his family, who blessed us from the bottom of their hearts. These poor Savoyards are such good people! After dinner we went under the shade of the large trees, where, whilst I was collecting some dry bits

of wood to make our coffee, mama amused herself in herborising in the brushwood; and with the flowers of the nosegay which I had collected for her by the way, she made me observe in their formation a thousand interesting things which amused me much, and which were to give me a taste for botany; but the moment had not yet come, I was absorbed by too many other studies."[1]

In spite of all the glamour which Rousseau tries to throw over Madame de Warens, her portrait is revolting, and she appears not to have been a faithful type of the women of her time; but—if Rousseau's delineation of her is strictly true—a mere *lusus naturæ*, which ought to have been described in Latin in medical books.[2]

[1] "Des dîners faits sur l'herbe, à Montagnole, des soupers sous le berceau, la récolte des fruits, les vendanges, les veillées à teiller avec nos gens, tout cela faisoit pour nous autant de fêtes auxquelles maman prenoit le même plaisir que moi. Des promenades plus solitaires avoient un charme plus grand encore, parce que le cœur s'épanchoit plus en liberté. Nous en fîmes une entre autres qui fait époque dans ma mémoire, un jour de Saint-Louis dont maman portoit le nom. Nous partîmes ensemble et seuls de bon matin, après la messe qu'un carme étoit venu nous dire à la pointe du jour dans une chapelle attenante à la maison. J'avois proposé d'aller parcourir la côte opposée à celle où nous étions, et que nous n'avions point visitée encore. Nous avions envoyé nos provisions d'avance, car la course devoit durer tout le jour. Maman, quoique un peu ronde et grasse, ne marchoit pas mal: nous allions de colline en colline et de bois en bois, quelquefois au soleil et souvent à l'ombre, nous reposant de temps en temps, et nous oubliant des heures entières; causant de nous, de notre union, de la douceur de notre sort, et faisant pour sa durée des vœux qui ne furent pas exaucés. Tout sembloit conspirer au bonheur de cette journée. Il avoit plu depuis peu; point de poussière, et des ruisseaux bien courants; un petit vent frais agitoit les feuilles, l'air étoit pur, l'horizon sans nuages, la sérénité régnoit au ciel comme dans nos cœurs. Notre dîner fut fait chez un paysan, et partagé avec sa famille, qui nous bénissoit de bon cœur. Ces pauvres Savoyards sont si bonnes gens! Après le dîner nous gagnâmes l'ombre sous de grands arbres, où, tandis que j'amassois des brins de bois sec pour faire notre café, maman s'amusoit à herboriser parmi les broussailles; et avec les fleurs du bouquet que chemin faisant je lui avois ramassé, elle me fit remarquer dans leur structure mille choses curieuses, qui m'amusèrent beaucoup, et qui devoient me donner du goût pour la botanique: mais le moment n'étoit pas venu, j'étois distrait par trop d'autres études."—Part i. book 6.

[2] Rousseau's would-be philosophical description of Madame de Warens' character appears to me wholly false. Compare part i. book 5 of the *Confessions*, with his reasons for leaving her, part i. book 6.

The *Social Contract* is, as its author informs us, a portion of a larger work, "undertaken before he had considered his powers," and which, with this exception, he committed to the flames. It is an attempt to determine the basis upon which positive laws should be founded; and in this sense it serves as introductory to the work of Montesquieu. Rousseau states his object to be to discover "whether, in the civil order, there can exist any rule of sure and legitimate administration, taking men as they are, and laws as they might be;" and in his first chapter he enters boldly upon his inquiry and his solution. "Man is born free, and he is everywhere in bonds. One imagines himself master of others, who is none the less a greater slave than they. . . . If I were to consider force alone, and the effect derived therefrom, I should say: So long as a people is constrained to obey, and obeys, it does well; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does still better; for, recovering its liberty by the same right which deprived it thereof, either it is justified in resuming it, or there was no justification for taking it away. But the social order is a sacred right which serves as the basis of all others. Yet this right does not come from nature; it is therefore founded upon conventions." And in order to arrive at the theoretic character of these conventions, Rousseau proceeds to carry us back to the formation and constitution of the earliest human societies, for the purpose of tracing from thence downwards the gradual establishment of the social order. "The conventions at which men have arrived are by some writers didactically asserted to have their origin in divine sanction, if not divine dictation; whereof there is no sufficient proof. Others say that they spring from patriarchal government, or from the right of the strongest. The first of these principles is contained within too narrow limits; the second is rather a fact than a principle, and proves nothing. But grant that men are all born free and equal, and you can-

not avoid the conclusion that the social order has been based upon a social contract. It remains to discover the true form of this contract;—a form which defends and protects, with the common force of all, the person and property of each member, and for which each member associating himself with all obeys only on his own account, and remains as free as before." In this supremacy of all over each, there is no usurpation or tyranny, for "the condition is equal for all." The usurpation begins when the condition of all, or of a certain number, becomes unequal; when a law is made not for all alike, but for some to the detriment of others. But so long as the primary social contract is observed, so long are the laws created by all for all essentially legitimate and necessary, and the government of all by all essentially good. "There are two ways wherein a government degenerates—namely, when it becomes narrow, or when the state is dissolved. The government is narrowed when it passes from the majority to the minority—that is, from the democracy to the aristocracy, and from the aristocracy to the monarchy." As to the form of government, Rousseau wisely stops short of a positive declaration in favour of any one in particular. "When it is asked, in an absolute manner, What is the best government? a question is proposed which is unsolvable and indeterminate; or, if this answer be preferred, it has as many good solutions as there are possible combinations in the absolute and relative positions of the people. But if it were asked by what sign one may recognise whether a certain people is ill or well governed, the question might be resolved. . . . Other things being equal, the government under which, apart from external aid, apart from naturalisations and colonies, the citizens populate and multiply the most, is infallibly the best." The opinion is hazardous, even if we lay all due stress upon the proviso of "other things being equal." And no doubt Rousseau's opinions were always more or less hazardous;

often the most hazardous when the most positively asserted. But it is to be remembered that he spoke to a nation which, in the majority of the interests on which he cared to touch, had worked itself round to a sort of second childhood ; a nation to whom the most elementary principles of political truth had become obscure. To the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century the *Social Contract* came in the form of a revelation ; to the Frenchmen of 1789, or at all events to a great proportion of those who sat in the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, the political teaching of Rousseau was nothing short of a gospel. And he would be a rash man indeed who would deny that the lessons of the *Social Contract* have not resulted, upon the whole, in an immense accession of civil liberty to France.[1]

But it was not in the domain of political economy that Rousseau was at his best and most characteristic level. His was the character-rôle of the eighteenth century, and it was the part of a social reformer, of a seer eaten up by enthusiasm for the most natural type of human society which might be possible at so vast a distance from the origin of humanity. If Rousseau could have been Adam, and Thérèse Levasseur Eve, it is not improbable that the world's first parents would have been sublimely happy, and would never have forfeited Eden ; but as Rousseau was not a Frenchman of the *ancien régime,* he could at least go back in imagination to the primeval age, and show his corrupt and over-civilised contemporaries how to approach as near as might be to the neglected model. He could deduce from before the fall his precepts and prescriptions for the eighteenth century ; he could indicate from first

[1] An edition of the *Social Contract* was published at Lausanne, in 1797, with the following dedication to Bonaparte :—"Citizen-general, 'I have some presentiment,' says J. J. Rousseau, in his twelfth book of the *Contrat Social,* that one day the little island of Corsica will astonish the world.' Europe asks to-day, citizen-general, What is the place of your birth? France replies to Europe : It is the island of Corsica."

principles how the vices and abuses of civilisation were to be remedied. He could take two plastic souls, a boy and a girl, and educate them upon a model which should serve for every father and mother in the world — a model which had been shaped and fashioned by Nature herself, and which knew none of the artificialities of looking-glass and dancing-master, of powder and whalebone, of compliments and conventionalities. Such was the idea of *Emile;* and this also was an irresistible revelation to the contemporaries of Rousseau. The book impressed them marvellously ; its success was immense, and its effect incalculable. After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764—to which it no doubt contributed, however indirectly —its circulation was redoubled, and its influence multiplied tenfold. It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of the revolution produced upon the national education of France by this single romance. In every station of life parents began to bring up their children as men, and not as puppets. Louis XVI. himself was taught a trade, and amongst the nobility who fled before the storm of 1789, many were glad to earn their livelihood by the exercise of manual industries, which, but for *Emile,* they would never have acquired.[1]

In his treatment of the education of girls Rousseau displayed in all its force the ardent sensibility of his strongly human character. His personal influence was always greater with women than with men. They devoured every line that he wrote, they were converted to all his ideas, they acted upon all his suggestions. More than one of the proudest and

[1] Arthur Young, who was in France in 1787, says in his *Travels:* "Women of the first fashion in France are now ashamed of not nursing their own children ; and stays are universally proscribed from the bodies of the poor infants, which were for so many ages tortured in them. . . . Mankind are much indebted to that splendid genius (Rousseau) who, when living, was hunted from country to country, to seek an asylum, with as much venom as if he had been a mad dog ; thanks to the vile spirit of bigotry, which has not yet received its death's wound."

purest Frenchwomen was ready to put herself at the mercy of this man whose soul exerted so subtle an authority over their own. He was the *grande passion* of many a young girl, many a wife and mother, many a fashionable and intellectual woman. The secret of this power lay in the fact of his enthusiasm for the sex, his belief in their own illimitable power, their own inestimable worth. In *Emile*, in the *New Héloïse*, he draws a grand distinction between the sexes. The dead level of equality, the cold assertion of woman's right to the same education and the same condition as man, would have shocked and pained him beyond measure; and even the moderate ideas of Thomas in this direction were incompatible with the fervid persuasive style with which Rousseau drew a bold line between the domains of male and female education. The principles on which he trained Sophie to be the companion of Emile were entirely distinct from the principles on which he trained Emile to take his place in the world. Unquestionably he went too far in his limitation of the training of women. He could conceive no higher destiny for them than that of ripening steadily from the cradle to the veil; to become thereafter the reasonable companions, it might be the guides and mistresses of men, but never to become their rivals or their opponents. "To please them (men), to be useful to them, to be loved and honoured by them, to bring them up when young, to take care of them when old, to counsel and console them, to make their lives pleasant and sweet: such are the duties of women in all times, and such is what they ought to be taught from their infancy." And this, observe, not because men choose to have such companions in their wives, but because it is what women are and must be at their best. "If we had to wait until they were able methodically to discuss these deep questions, we should run the risk of never speaking to them on such questions at all." The danger clearly lies in the generalisation. Some women

can comprehend and discuss better than they can please and console ; some, again, never have the chance of bringing up the young or taking care of the old. It is for these, and these alone, that education need know no limits ; and this is just the side of the question which Rousseau neglected. But it is easy to see why his countrywomen loved and worshipped him ; and it is easy also to see why his teachings, in this respect also, were pregnant of such great results.

Of course Rousseau was the master of a school in literature as well as in politics and society. His recourse to the natural and the simple, in place of the artificial and the conventional, his ardour and exaltation of thought and language, rising frequently into enthusiasm, and not unfrequently lapsing into declamation, could not fail to communicate themselves to others. Even his rivals, even men of more powerful intellect than his own, even d'Holbach, Thomas, Marmontel, Diderot, Voltaire, could not avoid being modified in their style by the style of Rousseau. They became more rhetorical, more declamatory, more impassioned, more paradoxical. Upon men of less note, and upon the next generation in particular, Rousseau's literary influence was more marked. French oratory had languished since the time of Bossuet and his contemporaries ; now it was to revive in another form. Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, almost all the revolutionary orators, widely as they diverged in opinion and in expression, betrayed the influence of Rousseau's fervid eloquence. In vain La Harpe wrote in the *Mercure*, after Rousseau's death, that he was "the most subtle of sophists, the most eloquent of rhetoricians, the most shameless of cynics," that he himself could never appreciate the paradoxical arrogance which was called his energy, and the pretentiousness of phraseology which they called his ardour.; in vain Voltaire had sneered, Hume and d'Alembert had ridiculed him ; in vain Rousseau's own friends had admitted

his shortcomings or deplored his excesses; he remained one of the greatest, if not the very greatest literary power of the age, and his influence on letters, as on life and politics, was deeper, if not wider and more enduring, than that of any other Frenchman of the century.

§ 2. A talented Literary Parvenu

Before we actually enter upon the period of the Revolution there is one other figure which we must attempt to present to the spectators of the curious melodrama enacted in France during the eighteenth century; a figure which ought to stand out prominently amongst the motley group of actors —and that not so much by virtue of literary merit and importance, as because of a certain fantastic individuality which at once commands our interest and evokes our laughter. The Figaro of his age, himself the creator of the Figaro with whom all the world has since grown familiar, Pierre Augustin Caron, afterwards Beaumarchais,[1] and a little later *de* Beaumarchais by letters patent of his own imagination, was an exaggerated type of the lucky adventurer of the *ancien régime*, during the latter part whereof it was by no means difficult for an adventurer to disport himself on the outskirts of the court, provided he was not deficient in impudence, or in money, or in literary ability. Madame de Tencin had taught the young Marmontel that, in order to hold his own in the highest society of Paris and Versailles, he had but to *viser au solide*, and to make friends amongst women rather than men. Beaumarchais started without patronage, but he instinctively guided his conduct by these golden rules. Shrewd common sense he had by nature, and it was nature also which fur-

[1] 1732-1799.

nished him with the handsome face, the commanding figure, the easy bearing and confidence, which enabled him to make his way amongst the fair sex. Impudence too, and pluck, were characteristic with the young watchmaker who determined to shine in the fashionable world, and who, by dint of mere perseverance and good fortune, in spite of his dangerous versatility and love of pleasure, left behind him at his death not only a literary reputation but also a vast fortune.

The son of a watchmaker, Caron followed the same occupation; and at the age of twenty, after successfully vindicating his title to a patent out of which a rival had endeavoured to cheat him, he obtained, through his first wife's money, a post about the court, the principal duty of which was to "precede the viands of his Majesty." Not long satisfied with this advancement, he took to playing the guitar, and providing the music for the entertainments of the daughters of Louis XV., and of the ladies and gentlemen of the court. By this time he had learned the trick of fine manners, had assumed the *de*, and had forgotten the watchmaking. One day a courtier ventured to remind him of it, handing him his watch for repair. Beaumarchais took the watch, saying, "I warn you that I have become very clumsy;" and then he dropped it on the ground. Another courtier joked him about his nobility. "Sir," answered Beaumarchais, "I hold the receipt of the sum I paid for it." A third went farther, and offered the *parvenu* a serious insult. Beaumarchais challenged him to a duel, and killed him. A man so ready with his tongue and with his sword could not but succeed; and, moreover, he had won the ladies on his side. It was, however, the financier Paris-Duverney, a man of discernment and literary taste, who thirty years before had laid the foundation of Voltaire's fortune, to whom Beaumarchais owed his greatest advancement. He put the young man in the way of proving his financial abilities; and he did it to such a good purpose that

a few years later he was able to purchase the post of lieutenant-general of the hunt for half a million of francs. All this time his life was one of pleasure as well as of money-making; and his adventures would suffice for a novel of infinite interest and variety.

The desire to be known as a man of letters came to Beaumarchais as soon as his anxiety to be rich was satisfied. At the age of thirty-five he wrote his drama of *Eugénie*, which barely escaped being a failure; three years later he produced *The Two Friends*, which had no success at all. His next literary effort was called forth by the first check which his prosperity received, and which curiously illustrates the manners of the age. On the death of Paris-Duverney, Beaumarchais struck the balance of his accounts with his late patron, and made out that the estate of the latter owed him fifteen thousand francs. The legatee, a certain Count de la Blache, resisted the claim; Beaumarchais went to law, and gained his cause. The count appealed to Parliament; and when Beaumarchais was about to prepare for this new contest with his usual lavish employment of bribes and gifts, he was suddenly cast into prison on account of a quarrel which he had had with the Duke de Chaulnes, with whose mistress he was said to have been too intimate. A report had to be drawn up about the suit by M. Goezmann, a member of the Parliament of Paris,[1] to whose wife Beaumarchais sent a hundred louis, and a watch of the same value; and, according to his own account, Madame exacted a further fifteen louis for her husband's secretary. The case, nevertheless, went against him; and M. Goezmann returned the hundred louis and the watch. Beaumarchais, who always had an eye to small things—though he gave many instances

[1] The Parliament was called at that time "the Parliament Maupeou. The chancellor of that name suppressed the old parliament and established a new one, composed of the members of the grand council, and also of seventy-five others, whose offices were not hereditary, and who were chosen by the king.

of generosity to needy men—claimed the fifteen louis in addition ; and the counsellor, having a mind to stick to these, and perceiving that Beaumarchais was in evil odour with the authorities and with his former patrons at court, flatly denied that his wife had received the money, and accused him of attempted bribery. The bribery of a counsellor of Parliament was a crime to which heavy penalties were attached, amongst them being the loss of civil rights. Beaumarchais, knowing that he was in fact guilty of this crime, and that he could not hope to escape punishment, rose to the occasion, and displayed the genius of which he was undoubtedly possessed. He sat down and wrote his *Memorial* (1773) ; became in fact a special pleader in his own cause, and appealed, not so much to the judges as to public opinion, against the sentence which was hanging over him.

This *Memorial* is nothing else than the romance which I have just said might be woven out of Beaumarchais' life ; but it is the romance only of the first, and that the least entertaining and stirring portion of it. He describes all that he had been and done, all that he was, and possibly much that he was not. He writes with a dash and spirit which wrung from Voltaire the warmest eulogy, and which inspired Goethe to dramatise one of his episodes, wherein Beaumarchais relates how he had gone to Spain to rescue his sister from the clutches of the infamous Clavijo.[1] He covered all his enemies with ridicule, Goezmann and his wife, the judges, the Parliament itself. The success of this *Memorial*, from a literary point of view, was immense. Everybody read and talked of it. Public opinion sympathised with the man who had been so lucky, and who would not tamely submit to be deserted by his luck. Such phrases as the following, comparatively new at the time, would undoubtedly help his

[1] Beaumarchais was condemned February 16, 1774, and on the 1st of June 1774 Goethe's tragedy *Clavijo* was ready.

success : " I am a citizen," he writes ; " I am a citizen ; that means that I am neither a courtier, nor an abbé, nor a nobleman, nor a financier, nor a favourite, nor anything which is called power to-day. I am a citizen ; that is to say something quite new, something unknown, unheard of in France. I am a citizen ; that is to say, what you should have been for two hundred years, what you will be in twenty years perhaps." Goezmann was expelled from Parliament, the scribblers who had attacked Beaumarchais dared not show their faces ; but for all that his appeal was dismissed. Half Paris hastened to call upon the victim, for victim he was. Society was closed against the man whom the law declared infamous, and he could never dream of finding his way back to the court, where he had once been so much in favour. It would have been enough to crush most men ; but Beaumarchais was not to be crushed. All the energy of his mind was at once directed towards securing his rehabilitation.

He had again in 1781 a lawsuit with the banker Kornmann, for whom Bergasse was advocate, and who accused him of having aided in the seduction of his wife. He wrote several brochures, gained his suit before the court, but lost it before public opinion. For three years he laboured at the apparently hopeless task of regaining the favour of his former friends ; and the devices which he employed are subject-matter for another romance—this time, indeed, for a melodramatic farce. He bethought him of offering himself for the secret service of the king, and he began by revealing the fact that a terrible libel on Madame du Barry was about to be issued in London. His offer of service was accepted ; he hastened to England, and bought up every copy of the libel before it had been published.[1] Returning to Paris

[1] This libel, *Mémoires secrets d'une femme publique*, was written by Charles Thévenot de Morande (1748-1803), who received for its suppression 20,000 *livres*, and a yearly pension of 4000 *livres*.

in the hope of being restored to favour, he found that Louis XV. was on his deathbed; his toil had gone for nothing. The next scene of the comedy is more exciting, though it does not display much originality of conception. This time it was a pamphlet against Marie Antoinette. Louis XVI. believed what Beaumarchais told him, and gave him a commission written in his own hand, which the zealous messenger enclosed in a box of gold, and hung round his neck. He went to England, to Holland, to Nuremberg, to Vienna; he tracked the pamphlet down to the very last copy, which he found in the possession of a Jew, in the depths of an Austrian forest. He seized the copy, and was returning in triumph, when he was set upon by robbers, who struck him to the ground with their poniards; but the golden locket, containing the king's talisman, saved his life. Wounded and weak, he made his way back to Vienna; and here he was thrown into prison by Maria Theresa, mother of the French queen. Liberated at last, he came to Paris and related his hairbreadth escapes; but alas, there were found those who persuaded the government that Beaumarchais was but attempting to deceive them. Nothing daunted, he began again. The Chevalier d'Eon, who lived in London, had been tantalising the curiosity of France, which did not know whether to believe him a man or a woman. The government held to the latter opinion, and wished to compel her to retain the garments proper to her sex. Beaumarchais undertook the commission. To him the *chevalière* admitted that she was a woman; and, moreover, that she had become so sensible of his, Beaumarchais', charms that she would consent thenceforth never to appear as a man, provided, as a mere formality, that the government would settle an income upon her. This was agreed to; Beaumarchais had earned his pardon, and received it; and the Chevalier—for it was a man after all—laughed quietly in his sleeves. Restored to favour, Beau-

marchais obtained a contract for supplying the American colonies, then revolting against England, with arms ; and he made more money by this speculation than by any other he had undertaken.[1]

Beaumarchais now set to work to acquire new fame as an author ; and in his comedies, the *Barber of Seville* and the *Marriage of Figaro*, he made two happy hits. *Tarare* was little less happy ; and its history is as curious as any of the curious episodes of its author's life. It was played by the royal family at the Trianon, it was interdicted by the police, it was read in the drawing-rooms, it was condemned by the ministry. Louis himself, in a fit of annoyance, sent Beaumarchais to prison, the public made a demonstration in his favour ; he was released, apologised to, offered a pension, and received also the arrears due to him, two millions of francs, which he employed on his American contract. Soon afterwards he brought out the first complete edition of Voltaire, which he was compelled to issue across the frontier, at Kehl. When the Revolution broke out he was accused of wishing to provide arms to the émigrés. Obliged to flee, he wandered in England and Holland, returned to France, was put into prison, and barely escaped being put to death. He died suddenly in 1799 in an apoplectic fit.

The Barber of Seville (1775) and the *Marriage of Figaro* (1784), are two fantastic comedies founded upon the adventures of one and the same character—an entirely new and bright creation. Figaro, a village barber in the first piece, who has tried his hand at several trades, contrives in various ways to outwit every one, succeeds, by his skill, in everything that he undertakes, and does what he likes with all men. He is always free and easy, sarcastic, not too par-

[1] It was not, however, until 1835 that his heirs received from the United States Government the payment of the balance of 800,000 francs due to Beaumarchais.

ticular about the means to be employed, and is, in one word, a portrait, and that not a flattered one, of the author himself, just as Chérubin may possibly have been one of Beaumarchais in his youth. In the second piece, Figaro, who has become a valet, declaims too much, and represents the hatred of the people against the aristocracy; of the valet against the master, and that master a young, witty, and generous nobleman.

The *Memorial* of Beaumarchais belongs in some sense to a species of French literature for which the eighteenth century was especially famous; and it was amongst the first of a copious stream of memoirs, pleas, protests, and pamphlets, which, towards the Revolution, became ever more numerous, more bold, and more eloquent. Public opinion was by this time completely formed in France. Voltaire, more than any other single man, had taught his country how to appreciate wit and eloquence and fervour at its best; and the national genius provided both for the supply and for the consumption of this all-powerful and ever-welcome literature. Special pleading is perhaps the most characteristic general term which we can apply to it; and the special pleading intended for courts of law was one of its most brilliant and lofty types. "When Mirabeau began to speak in the National Assembly, he was at first but the continuator of those courageous men who had pleaded for Calas, Sirven, Labarre, Lally-Tollendal, who had stigmatised one after another all the iniquities of the social order of things—the Voltaires, the de Beaumonts, the La Chalotais, the Linguets, Beaumarchais himself."[1] The reports and letters of the various intendants, especially during the last generation of the *ancien régime*, are in themselves a literature of intense and painful eloquence, special pleadings, more or less conscious, in behalf of the down-trodden people.[2]

[1] Paul Albert, *la littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 457.

[2] For abundant illustrations see Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. v. ch. 1.

The national archives contain these and similar documents of the same period by the hundred. The *procès-verbaux* of the provincial assemblies are written in words of fire, than which nothing can be more forcible or more harrowing. Such pamphlets and treatises, again, as the *Ephémérides du Citoyen*, by Théron de Montaugé (1766), the *Description of Auvergne*, by Dulaure (1789), the *Doléances* of Biarzat (1788), the *Treatise on Population*, by the marquis de Mirabeau, and the *Correspondence* of Métra, are scathing and unanswerable confirmations of facts with which history has made us only too familiar. There was more than enough in the condition of France during the eighteenth century to give the inspiration of a divine invective to the more patriotic writers of the age, and to add an eloquence to literature which it could derive from none of the more commonplace sorrows and passions of humanity.

§ 3. Society at the End of the Eighteenth Century.

Amongst the characteristics of French literature in the eighteenth century we must not fail to take note of one which was at the same time a characteristic of society in general, and particularly of fashionable and intellectual society — I mean the taste for indecent anecdotes, for unclean allusions and jests. The numerous scandals of the court, and of the ranks of society which came next to it, half concealed, and more than half excused as they were by the *convenances* of etiquette, were repeated from mouth to mouth with the utmost zest and industry; and the appetite for such narratives had grown so strong that, when the supply failed, it became absolutely necessary for the retailers of that kind of commodity, who were the great majority of the fashionable world,

to invent new stories, or at least to make use of the inventions of others. In such a state of things it was not to be wondered at that even men and women of letters capable of the very highest flights should condescend to provide what their readers most desired to have. Few writers of the eighteenth century could resist such an inducement; even Montesquieu, as we have seen, thought it necessary to flavour his *Persian Letters*, and to a less degree his *Spirit of Law*, with these far from aromatic spices. Voltaire made his *Pucelle* so hot in the mouth that it could not be put into the hands of an ordinary English reader of the present day. Rousseau is still more unreadable in parts, though the fleshliness is less assumed than indigenous in this genuine sentimentalist. Other writers of inferior literary merit were not squeamish in their subjects or their suggestions. Some books, as obscene as it is possible to write them, were favourites in the drawing-rooms and boudoirs of not a few of the ladies of Paris; and we may be sure that the rank and file of society was not more exclusive in its tastes than those from whom it took its tone. And the worst of it was, that the wit of such literature as this was generally the least of its recommendations. Indecency was relished for its own sake, and for much the same reason that it was practised in everyday life. Once more, literature is but the reflexion of manners and actions; and we may judge of what the Frenchmen and Frenchwomen of the *ancien réyime* were by what they liked best to read. In England, during the same period, or perhaps a generation earlier, there was coarseness enough; and of the two nations French critics are apt to consider England the coarser. This may be true; but in the indecency of Swift, of Fielding, of Smollett—I except Sterne—we can see that it is the natural product of overfed animal spirits, flavoured with a good deal of genuine wit, which is set off and rendered more pungent by the very license of the diction. In France it

can hardly be said that this was usually the case amongst the literary panderers of the eighteenth century. The vice was more general, more subtle, more deliberately indulged ; and it was a vice which had sapped the very bases of national morality. One example will suffice, and I borrow it in preference from an Englishman, Arthur Young, who knew France well, and travelled there during the year 1787, and two following years. Being at Béziers, he was anxious to visit the abbé Rozier, the celebrated editor of the *Journal de Physique*, "and who is now publishing a dictionary of husbandry. . . . They told me that he had left Béziers two years . . . because the bishop of Béziers had been cutting a road through the abbé's farm, at the expense of the province, to lead to the house of the bishop's mistress." [1]

Society in France—civil, religious, and domestic society—was indeed at its worst and weakest ; and this not because there was not infinite refinement, art, cultivation, and, in some few quarters, prosperity, but because there were few gradations of prosperity between the very highest and the very lowest ; because all wholesome relations between class and class were at an end ; and because, as Rousseau had shown, the virtual contract of society had been utterly violated and set at nought. In some parts of the country, indeed, the signs of decay were far less conspicuous than in others, and certain of the larger provincial towns presented a striking contrast to the wretchedness of the provinces in general. Espe-

[1] Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, etc, July 24, 1737. I give here his further remarks : "This is a pretty feature of a government ; that a man is to be forced to sell his estate, and driven out of a country, because bishops make love—I suppose to their neighbours' wives, as no other love is fashionable in France. Which of my neighbours' wives will tempt the Bishop of Norwich to make a road through my farm, and drive me to sell Bradfield? I give my authority for this anecdote, the chat of a table d'hôte ; it is as likely to be false as true ; but Languedocian bishops are certainly not English ones." The bishop of Béziers from 1771-1790 was Aimar Claude de Nicolaï, a nobleman of ancient descent.

cially was this the case as it came under the observation of travellers, who of course saw less under the surface than Frenchmen themselves. Arthur Young, in the very interesting volume of travels which gives one of the most faithful pictures extant of the France of 1787-1789—a volume we have already mentioned—draws a graphic sketch of the prosperity of Bordeaux.[1] He found the merchants of that city living in a most luxurious style, with "houses and establishments on expensive scales: great entertainments, and many served on plate."

"The theatre, built about ten or twelve years ago, is by far the most magnificent in France. The building is insulated, and fills up a space of three hundred and six feet by one hundred and sixty-five, one end being the principal front, containing a portico the whole length of it, of twelve very large Corinthian columns. . . . The theatre itself is of a vast size; in shape the segment of an oval. The establishment of actors, actresses, singers, dancers, orchestra, etc., speaks the wealth and luxury of the place. . . . Pieces are performed every night, Sundays not excepted, as everywhere in France. . . . This theatre, which does so much honour to the pleasures of Bordeaux, was raised at the expense of the town, and cost 270,000 English pounds sterling."

Not much sign here of decay, beyond what may be found in every large town of Europe at the present day; and certainly Young did not at that moment dream of decay. After mentioning "that the rent of houses and lodgings rises every day, they complain that the expenses of living have increased in ten years full thirty per cent," he continues, "there can hardly be a clearer proof of an advance in prosperity." But later on he sees France under other aspects, and finds reason to change his tone. When he saw one quarter of the arable land left barren, for want of enterprise and capital; the small proprietors and labourers drained of their earnings and wages

[1] August 26, 1787.

by the exactions of the Government; men who ought to have been the mainstay of national prosperity actually driven to abandon their property or tenancies because they could no longer provide both taxes for the State and food for themselves; when he was forced to the conclusion that the French agricultural labourer was as much as seventy-six per cent less comfortable, worse fed and clothed, worse treated in health and disease, than the English; when he saw, as at Combourg, "the people almost as wild as their country, and the town one of the most brutal, filthy places that can be seen; mud houses, and no pavement:"[1] at Montauban "the people . . . if possible, worse clad than with no clothes at all," and "one-third of . . . this province (Brittany) seems uncultivated;"[2] at Clermont, streets which reminded him of nothing better than "trenches cut through a dung-heap;" on every hand poverty, neglect, starvation, misery, save in a few large towns, and amongst the idlers of the metropolis, who were luxurious at their fellow-creatures' expense, our honest Englishman cried out, "Oh! if I were the legislator of France for a day, I would make such great lords skip!"[3] "What have kings, and ministers, and parliaments, and states to answer for, seeing millions of hands that would be industrious, yet idle and starving, through the execrable maxims of despotism, or the equally detestable prejudices of a feudal nobility!" He could not but realise the fact that the ruin of France was at hand, even if he had not had the opportunity[4] of witnessing in the summer of 1789 the outbreak of the French Revolution.[5]

[1] Sept. 1, 1788.
[2] Sept. 5, 1788.
[3] Aug. 29, 1787.
[4] Sept. 5, 1788.

[5] Dr. John Moore, who travelled in France about 1773 with the Duke of Hamilton, saw this also; and in his *View of Society and Manners in France*, etc., third edition, 1780, he says: "Examples of the abuse of power and insolence of office are to be met with everywhere. . . . Everything in this kingdom is arranged for the accommodation of the rich and the powerful. . . . To have an adequate idea of the wealth of England, we must visit the provinces,

Writing on the 27th of June 1789, after the king had been frightened by the mob, and by the resolute attitude of its leaders, into summoning the three estates to meet for the discussion of the national crisis, Arthur Young observes :—

"It was represented to him (Louis XVI.) that the want of bread was so great in every part of the kingdom that there was no extremity to which the people might not be driven: that they were nearly starving, and consequently ready to listen to any suggestions, and on the *qui vive* for all sorts of mischief: that Paris and Versailles would inevitably be burnt; and, in a word, that all sorts of misery and confusion would follow his adherence to the system announced in the '*séance royale*.'"

The English spectator of this first phase of the Revolution appears to have been very sanguine of its results.

"Such benefits," he continues, "will confer happiness on twenty-five millions of people; a noble and animating idea, that ought to fill the mind of every citizen of the world, whatever be his country, religion, or pursuit. I will not allow myself to believe for a moment that the representatives of the people can ever so far forget their duty to the French nation, to humanity, and their own fame, as to suffer any inordinate and impracticable views, any visionary or theoretic systems, any frivolous ideas of speculative perfection, much less any ambitious private views, to impede their progress or turn aside their exertions from that security which is in their hands, to place on the chance and hazard of public commotion and civil war the invaluable blessings which are certainly in their power. I will not conceive it possible that

and see how the nobility, the gentry, and especially the farmers and country people in general, live. . . . To retain a favourable notion of the wealth of France, we must remain in the capital, or visit a few trading or manufacturing towns, but must seldom enter the château of the seigneur or the hut of the peasant. In the one we shall find nothing but tawdry furniture, and from the other we shall be scared by penury. . . . When there is a permanent poverty through various reigns, and for a long tract of years, among the peasantry of such a country as France, this seems to me the surest proof of a careless, and consequently an oppressive government. . . . As matters are at present, in my opinion, no body of men in France has, properly speaking, any rights."

men, who have eternal fame within their grasp, will place the rich inheritance on the cast of a die, and losing the venture, be damned among the worst and most profligate adventurers that ever disgraced humanity."

Arthur Young had not fathomed the depths of the situation in France; and it is only just to him to say that few men, even amongst the popular leaders themselves, had a much more definite idea of what the next three or four years were to bring forth. "The events that followed," said the traveller in 1794, "were as little to be thought of as myself being made king of France."[1]

[1] This Arthur Young says in a note of the second edition of his *Travels.*

BOOK VII.

THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

1. The Orators of the Revolution.

The progress of the French Revolution from its outbreak in 1789 to the close of the century, was marked by a great intellectual and literary activity, well worthy of careful consideration, though neither so striking nor so brilliant in its results as the literature which immediately preceded it. Within the dozen years previous to the meeting of the three estates of the National Assembly, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Buffon had died, and there was no one to take their place. It is true that the nation no longer needed philosophers and poets. These had amply completed their work, and the men of ideas were giving way before the men of action. The philosophers of the eighteenth century had been the pioneers of national emancipation; they had given the *coup de grâce* to every corrupt institution in the country; they had sown the seeds of the evil, as well as of the good, that was destined to usher in a new era; they had created their Frankenstein, and perhaps it was well for them that they should not live to see him at his work. On the other hand, if they had died before the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, they were denied the triumph of witnessing the fulfilment of all their highest and most honourable ambitions. The right of thought

and speech, the principle of representative self-government, equality before the law, an open career in the public services, the emancipation of industry—all these principles, with all that they imply, had been constantly advocated in France for upwards of half a century; but their first and most powerful advocates did not live to see them carried out. The drama was enacted without their assistance. They had furnished its subject, but it was reserved for others, with less genius and more hardihood, to elaborate its plot.

Men of letters were now to be succeeded by men of speech: eloquence assumes the position hitherto occupied by wielders of the pen. The Constituent and Legislative Assemblies and the Convention bring before us a school of rhetoric which, amidst all its passion and violence, yet manifestly continued the dominant philosophical ideas of the eighteenth century. "In the first, the doctrines of Montesquieu and Voltaire were represented by Mounier,[1] Malouet,[2] Lally-Tollendal;[3] the radical extreme, founded on the principles of the *Contrat Social*, was led by A. de Lameth,[4] Barnave,[5] the abbé Sieyès,[6] and A. Duport,[7] whilst the *ancien régime* found its apologists in Cazalès[8] and Maury.[9] Above all these towered the figure of the eloquent Mirabeau,[10] who asserted with unique force and superior intelligence the rights of the people. In the Legislative Assembly and in the Convention we find Condorcet,[11] the biographer of Voltaire, Vergniaud,[12] Guadet,[13] Gensonné,[14] disciples of the most impracticable views of Rousseau. The orators of the Convention lead us finally from Danton[15] to Robespierre[16] and Marat,[17] beyond the point where a literary record can take cognisance of them."[18]

[1] 1758-1806. [2] 1740-1814. [3] 1751-1830. [4] 1760-1829.
[5] 1761-1793. [6] 1748-1836. [7] 1759-1798. [8] 1758-1805.
[9] 1746-1817. [10] 1749-1791. [11] 1743-1794. [12] 1753-1793.
[13] 1758-1794. [14] 1758-1793. [15] 1759-1794. [16] 1758-1794.
[17] 1744-1793.

[18] Cf. Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 539.

Let us turn to Mirabeau first; Mirabeau, who might have done so much for his country if his character had been equal to his talent and his courage; Mirabeau, who, after succeeding Necker as the recognised mouthpiece of the national will in the Assembly of 1789, said to the Marquis de Brézé, who brought an imperious message from the king: "Go and tell him who sent you that we are here by the will of the people, and only bayonets shall drive us hence;" Mirabeau, who with bitter contrition exclaimed to a friend: "Ah, how the immorality of my youth hinders the public good!" In estimating the capacity of this earliest of the tribunes of the French people, we must remember that he had before him no model of parliamentary eloquence. When Louis XVI. was compelled to summon the States-General, they had not met for a century and three-quarters. The language fit to be employed by a Frenchman in deliberation upon the interests of his country was not stereotyped, as it is now-a-days in England, so that a man may sit down and study it in a volume of parliamentary debates. In other words, it was necessary that the orator should speak straight out from the heart, and translate his feelings into words on the spur of the moment; and only by such natural fervour and unpremeditated rhetoric could a member of the Constituent Assembly or the Convention secure a hearing. It was not merely his colleagues that he had to persuade; the galleries of the old court riding-school of the Tuileries, in which the meetings were held, were crammed by the most eager and critical crowds, whose applause and reproaches could not be suppressed. It was before such audiences that Mirabeau and the other active politicians of the Revolution had to speak; and on them, at a time when words were but the photographs of stirring events, the periods of a Bossuet or a Fléchier would have been thrown away.[1]

[1] I am much indebted to M. Gérusez's *Histoire de la littérature française pendant la révolution* for my chapters on the literary history of the Revolution.

Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, count de Mirabeau, was born at Bignon, near Nemours, of an old Italian family, and received an ill-regulated but very comprehensive education. The career of arms, to which his father introduced him, did not suit the loose and dissolute temper of the man, and, on account of some rivalry with his colonel for the favours of a fair lady, and subsequent quarrels, he left his regiment, without permission, and went to Paris. He was imprisoned in the fortress of the island of Ré, and whilst there he composed his *Essay on Despotism.* After his release he went to make a campaign in Corsica, and appeared to have behaved so courageously that his chiefs asked for him a captaincy; but his father, a stern and rather crazy political economist, would not allow this, and Honoré went to live with his uncle. In 1772 he married the daughter of the Marquis de Marignane, and lived at the castle of Mirabeau, but became seriously embarrassed by debts, and was anew put in prison in the castle of If, and afterwards in the fortress of Joux, in the Jura, near Pontarlier. He received permission to visit the town, became acquainted with the young wife of the old Marquis de Monnier, and fled with her first to Switzerland and then to Holland. But he was soon arrested and again imprisoned at Vincennes, where he remained nearly four years. During that time he is said to have written thirteen works; amongst them being one upon *Lettres de Cachet and the State Prisons,* in which he hits many a blot in the administration of justice, makes an eloquent plea for the liberty of the individual, and seems to have formed the resolution to break with his class and with the associations of absolutism. Between 1783 and 1787 he travelled, read, and wrote, and then took his seat in the Assembly as member for Aix.

Mirabeau was one of the men whom France had elected, after a hundred and seventy-five years of political silence, to represent her in the great council of the nation; and it is

worth while to bear in mind the intoxication of spirit under the influence of which these elections were made. "For two months," wrote the commandant of Armagnac to Necker,[1] at the end of May 1789, "inferior judges and lawyers, with which both town and country swarm, with a view to being elected to the States-General have dogged the steps of the members of the Third-Estate, under the pretext of standing by them, and enlightening their ignorance. . . . They have made a point of persuading them that, in the States-General, they alone would be masters and regulate all the affairs of the kingdom ; that the Third-Estate, in selecting its representatives amongst lawyers, would secure the might and the right to take the lead, to abolish nobility, and to cancel all its rights and privileges, so that it should no longer be hereditary ; but that all citizens, when they deserved it, should be entitled to claim it ; that, if the people would delegate them, they would see that all which the Third-Estate wished would be granted, since the lower clergy, members of the Third-Estate, having resolved to separate from the higher clergy, and to unite with them, the nobles and the clergy together would have but one vote against two of the Third-Estate. . . . If the Third-Estate had chosen sensible citizens or merchants, they would readily have combined with the other two orders." Mirabeau was not a lawyer, but it was in the spirit here described that he appealed for and obtained the suffrages of one of the very constituencies which the Marquis de Fodoas had before his eyes.

Of noble birth, "the plebeian count," as his aristocratic acquaintances contemptuously styled him, Mirabeau had renounced his order, and claimed the suffrages of the electors

[1] Letter of the Marquis de Fodoas to Necker, as quoted by Taine, *l'Ancien Régime*, whose chapter iv. bk. 5, is worth reading on the subject ; and so is the remarkable chapter xxi., "On the Revolution of France," in the second part of Arthur Young's *Travels in France*.

in the character of a modern Gracchus. Addressing a crowd of the commons of Provence, after describing the death of the Roman brothers, he cried: "Thus perished the last of the Gracchi; but, before he died, he cast a handful of dust to heaven, invoking the avenging gods; and from this dust sprang Marius; Marius, less great through his extermination of the Cimbrians and Teutons than for having annihilated in Rome the aristocratic power of the nobility." It was Mirabeau, an aristocrat, elected to be the scourge of aristocrats, who, on the meeting of the States-General, at once asserted and vindicated the supremacy of the Third-Estate, shook off the timid opposition of the nobility and clergy, and converted the national Parliament into a Constituent Assembly. Such was the first triumph of eloquence amongst the tribunes of the people.

It was the ill-advised dismissal of Necker[1] by the king which led to the leadership of the Assembly passing into Mirabeau's hands. The people had had confidence in Necker; they were enraged by his disgrace, and still more so by seeing the chamber surrounded by troops. An ominous report from Versailles came to add fuel to the fire of resentment. In the presence of the queen a crowd of dissolute courtiers had drunk confusion to the representatives of the people, and had boasted of their speedy suppression. They little knew the force of the rising storm. Five-and-thirty years ago, d'Argenson had foreseen this very crisis, and had declared that, whenever the States-General should be suffered to meet, they would not meet in vain. A vast mob marched from Paris to Versailles, slaughtered the guards, yelled insults against the queen, and brought back the king a virtual prisoner to the capital. In despatching a deputation to Louis from the chambers, Mirabeau had addressed them in one of the fiery outbursts of eloquence for which he is famous. "Tell him plainly," he said, "tell him that the mercenary hordes by whom we are invested received

[1] See about Necker, bk. v. ch. ii. § 5, Literary men of the day.

yesterday the visit of princes, princesses, minions, and favourites, with their caresses, their exhortations, and their presents; tell him that all night these foreign satellites, gorged with gold and wine, have been foretelling, in their impious orgies, the enslavement of France, and that their brutish prayers invoked the destruction of the National Assembly; tell him that in his own palace the courtiers have danced to the sound of this barbarous music, and that just such was the prelude of the St. Bartholomew!" Two days later Necker was recalled; but meanwhile the Bastille had fallen and the mob of Paris had tasted blood.

The condition of the finances was in the last degree critical; a few millions were necessary in order to save France from imminent bankruptcy; and the minister had not been able to induce the Assembly to vote them. Here were the delegates of a people which had for so many years been ground to the very dust by taxes, imposts, *tailles*, *corvées*, exactions of a hundred kinds; and they sat stolid and unreasoning in their simple determination not to lay another straw upon the nation's back. Mirabeau saw the whole predicament in an instant; and with perhaps the most lofty inspiration that has ever loosened the tongue of one of nature's genuine orators, he rushed to the tribune and spoke.

"What, then, is bankruptcy, if it is not the most cruel, the most unjust, the most unequal, the most disastrous of imposts? . . . . Two ages of plunder and robbery have dug the gulf in which the kingdom is ready to be swallowed up. We must close this fearful gulf! Well! here is a list of the owners of property in France; choose from amongst the wealthiest, that you may sacrifice the smallest number of citizens; but choose; for should not a small number perish to save the mass of the people? Come now, these two thousand notables possess wherewithal to cover the deficit. Bring back order into your finances, peace and prosperity to the kingdom. . . . Strike, immolate without pity these wretched victims! hurl them into the abyss.

. . . You start with horror, unreasonable men, cowardly men! Do you not see, then, that in decreeing bankruptcy, or, what is still more odious, rendering it inevitable without decreeing it, you stain yourselves by an act a thousand times more criminal; and, incredible fact, uselessly criminal? For, indeed, this horrible sacrifice would certainly wipe out the deficit; but do you suppose that, because you will not have paid, you will owe nothing more? Do you believe that the thousands, the millions of men, who in an instant will lose, by the terrible explosion or by its recoils, all that was the consolation and perhaps the only support of their lives, will leave you peaceably to enjoy your crime? You stolid contemplaters of the incalculable evils which this catastrophe will vomit upon France! you unfeeling self-seekers, who think that these convulsions of despair and misery will pass like so many others, and the more rapidly because they will be the more violent! are you quite sure that so many starving men will leave you quietly to relish the food whereof you will diminish neither the quantity nor the delicacy? . . . No, you will perish, and in the universal conflagration which you do not fear to light, the loss of your honour will not save a single one of your detestable enjoyments. . . . Ah, gentlemen, in reference to a ridiculous disturbance in the Palais-Royal, a laughable insurrection which had no importance save in the feeble imaginations or the perverse designs of a few insincere men, you lately heard these mad words: 'Catiline is at the gates of Rome, and they deliberate!' Whereas, of a certainty, there were near us neither a Catiline, nor perils, nor factions, nor Rome. . . . But to-day bankruptcy, hideous bankruptcy is here; it threatens to consume you, your property, and your honour—and you deliberate!"

This was the weapon of 1789; this rugged, natural, unstudied, and unpremeditated eloquence swayed the spirits of the national representatives, and gave into the orator's hands the guiding of the destinies of France. It was not, however, for long that Mirabeau was able to hold the reins which he had seized. He was already suspected by many on account of his former want of uprightness; he began to be still more seriously and generally suspected of a want of

honesty and perfect good faith. There is too much reason to believe that he sold himself to, or at least received money from, the court; and within a year of the Assembly's first meeting his popularity was gone. Barnave took his place, and, from conscientious motives, he pursued the same policy of friendship—or at least of good will—towards the king as Mirabeau had done with more mixed and doubtful views.

Let us present ourselves at a debate of the Assembly in the month of May 1790, and take our stand amidst the surging, vehement, murmuring, irrepressible crowd which filled the gallery of the riding-school to overflowing.[1] If their bearing annoys us, if we shrink from their muttered threats, or are compelled to laugh at their extravagant gestures; if we groan at the over-much emphasis of elbows, feet, and waving arms wherewith they score and underline the declamations of their delegates in the hall beneath, let us remember that we have placed ourselves side by side with the corpse of a giant suddenly recalled to life; that this is not a mere council of the nation, but the nation itself, which has cast off its shackles, which deliberates on its own fortunes, which stands for the first time face to face with its own destiny. Let us remember that this is new France, not the old *régime;* that it is the conscious centre of the world's astonished gaze; that Prussia, Austria, almost every monarchical government in Europe has shown hostility to its proceedings, and even threatened to intervene in French affairs. The occasion of this memorable debate, in which the leading orators of the Constituent Assembly were engaged, was the apprehension of war; not indeed of an aggressive war, such as followed upon the convention of Pillnitz a year or two later, but still a war in which France might have everything to lose, and in which she might find herself opposed to the enemies of her new expectations.

[1] See Gérusez, *Histoire de la littérature française pendant la révolution* bk. 1, ch. i.

A collision appeared to be imminent between England and Spain; and France was bound—or at least the court-party and some of the ministers declared her bound—by the family compact between Paris and Madrid to take the side of her neighbour. Mirabeau, as we have seen, was already suspected; and it was now openly averred in the capital that he had connived at the plan of fomenting this quarrel, and of involving his country in the struggle. A portion of the fleet had been fully equipped; the danger was close at hand; and thus a grave constitutional question was prematurely forced upon the Assembly. In whom did the responsibility of making war reside—in the king or in the people? This was the point at issue; and the violence with which it was debated out of doors found its natural reflection within the Assembly.

The debate whether the king or the Assembly should have the right of declaring war or concluding peace was opened by Charles de Lameth,[1] an aristocrat who had espoused the cause of liberty and popular supremacy, and who, after having been himself a courtier, despised his old associations with as much energy and with more sincerity than Mirabeau. He said—

"I am called upon to prove that if, from the principles of the constitution, it did not result that we ought to retain for the nation the right of peace and war—even if it were a sound principle to leave it to the king, the present circumstances would compel us to set aside this principle. I beg you to reflect in what circumstances and in what manner the difference between Spain and England has arisen; it is an old cause of war which has been fanned into fresh flame. Yesterday you heard of preparations which are in themselves a declaration of war; you cannot be ignorant of the connections of Spain: it is well known that our constitution terrifies tyrants: we are aware of the measures which Spain has taken to prevent the writings published in

[1] 1757-1832.

France from reaching that empire. A coalition has been entered into between a power which dreads revolution for itself, between a power which would destroy our constitution, and a family which may be incited by personal considerations. Here is sufficient to make you suspect the motives of this war. . . . If you declare that the king can make war, the constitution will be attacked and perhaps destroyed; the kingdom will be steeped in blood from end to end. If an army assembles, the malcontents created by our justice will take refuge with it. The rich—for it is the rich who constitute the malcontents; they have become rich by abuses, and you have dried up the hateful source of their wealth —the rich will employ every means to extend and nourish the trouble and disorder. But they will not succeed; for if they have gold we have iron, and we shall know how to use it."

At this confident tone the Assembly shouted with enthusiasm, and the galleries applauded with such vehemence that the business of the meeting was suspended for several minutes. Menou,[1] afterwards the general to whose lot it fell to surrender in Egypt the conquests of Bonaparte, followed, guaranteeing to his hearers a victory over the English. He was succeeded by a well-known speaker in the Assembly, the abbé Maury,[2] of plebeian birth, but still an apologist of the old *régime*, and, in particular, the champion of the Church against the confiscation of her revenues. A man of action, and well fitted to take a leading part in the politics of such a crisis, he was at the same time an orator by taste and training, and had already earned for himself a name both as a preacher and a panegyrist, on the old lines of French classical rhetoric. On the present occasion his argument was of course in favour of reserving to the king the right of making war and peace; and he brought to his task all the advantage which a thorough knowledge of history, carefully manipulated, could give him. The reasons which he brings forward in support of his contention are many and shrewd, though, indeed, they defeat his

[1] 1750-1810. [2] 1746-1817.

end by the length to which he carries them. In Maury's uncompromising mind, the Assembly itself was but dependent upon the king's authority; and he doubted whether it had so much as the exclusive privilege of voting subsidies.

"If reason and the public right of the kingdom are our only oracles here, I need only the king's letters providing for the convocation of the States-General, and the mandates of our constituencies, to show that we do not constitute a national convention, nor even a constituent body, and that all our conquests of authority are usurpations which the French people has never authorised. . . . A generous people is deceïved by the most skilful perfidy. I can easily imagine the shameful artifices of a demagogue, but it is certainly not in this Assembly that the fanaticism of popularity will find dupes or accomplices. I say, then, distinctly, that the legislative body, freed from all responsibility, given over to the supremacy of eloquence, to the seductions of gold, to the threats of a misled people, and, above all, to the first emotions of an unreflecting patriotism, could not inspire the nation with so much confidence as a citizen-king; a king who holds in his hand the clue of all the political relations of the state; a king who takes in at a glance the dispositions, plans, and means of all the courts; a king, in short, whose interests will always be inseparable from the public welfare."

This was eloquence, no doubt, and eloquence of an argumentative and persuasive kind; though it probably persuaded no man in the Assembly, which listened to it with impatience. Mirabeau took up the word in his more fervid and more persuasive style; but it was evident that he had lost his old charm. He adopted a middle course between maintaining the right of the king and vindicating the right of the Assembly to decree peace or war; but it was felt clearly enough that he was pleading the cause of the court. The revulsion against him in the mind of his hearers was instantaneous and general. Camille Desmoulins, his secretary, broke with him then and there. "It is useless for you to tell me," he

said, "that you have not received money. I have heard your motion. If you have received it, I despise you; if you have not received it, that is far worse, I regard you with horror." In contrast with the sinking star of Mirabeau, this debate brings before us the rising star of Barnave.[1] A deputy from the Dauphiné, he had practised as a lawyer in Grenoble, and was a young man full of intellectual force and generosity; and though a sincere champion of popular liberty, he was well affected towards the royal family. Circumstances brought him into direct rivalry with Mirabeau, against whom he pitted himself in the Assembly; and he was amongst the first to feel, with an instinct quickened by his rivalry, the insincerity of Mirabeau's position. His speech in the great debate which immediately preceded Mirabeau's fall is perhaps the best he ever delivered. He was less ready than his rival, less vehement, less enthralling; but his profession had trained him in the arts of the pleader, and his brilliance is that of a fervid and argumentative lawyer. He did not combat point-blank the allegations of Maury and of Mirabeau; he admitted that the king might often be in a better position to know how and when to make war than a popular assembly; and he admitted also that a popular assembly might not improbably be carried away by enthusiasm. But of the two evils he chose that which was bound up with the soundest principle; and the soundest principle was that which sprang out of popular sovereignty.

"The legislature may err; but it will recover itself, because its opinion is that of the nation; whilst the minister will err almost always, because his interests are not the same as those of the nation. It is in the interest of a minister that war should be declared, because then we should be forced to give him the handling of the immense subsidies which would be necessary. . . . The legislative body will not readily decide upon making

[1] 1761-1793.

war. Each of us has property, a family, children, a mass of personal interests which war may compromise."

Mirabeau had said that with a royal or ministerial initiative there was at all events a personal responsibility which could be called to account. Barnave shrewdly replies :

"It is vain to allege this responsibility; it is impracticable, absolutely impracticable, so long as the war lasts, for the success whereof the minister who commenced it is necessary. . . When your fellow-citizens and your brothers have perished, what end will be served by the death of a minister? Doubtless it will offer to the nations a grand example of justice; but will it restore to you that which you have lost? Not only is responsibility impracticable in case of war, but every one knows that the undertaking of war is a fatal method of escaping from a responsibility already incurred, so long as a deficit is still concealed: the minister declares war in order to cover, by pretended expenditure, the results of his depredations. The experience of the people has proved that the best method a clever minister can adopt to hide his crimes is to exact pardon from them by triumphs. We find but too many examples of this, in other countries as well as our own; there was no responsibility when we were slaves. I will only cite one; I take it from the freest people which ever existed. Pericles entered on the Peloponnesian war when he found it impossible to render his accounts: that is responsibility!"

Mirabeau, in his rejoinder, met this illustration brilliantly; and it is an excellent instance of the oratorical art of the greatest rhetorician of the period—

"He (Barnave) has cited the case of Pericles making war in order to avoid rendering his accounts. Would it not appear, from what he said, that Pericles was a king, or a despotic minister? Pericles was a man who, knowing how to flatter the popular passions, and to have himself duly applauded on quitting the tribune, by his bribery, or that of his friends, dragged into the Peloponnesian war—whom? the National Assembly of Athens."

It was during this debate that Mirabeau, feeling that he had been brought to bay before the public opinion of his fellow-citizens, delivered one of his best orations in the Assembly—a bold and fiery rejoinder, but full of the bitterness which presaged defeat. The night before, Barnave had received an ovation from the mob of Paris. Mirabeau, who might have shown more dignity in abstaining from all reference to it, said—after to a great extent withdrawing from the position which he had taken up the day before—

"It is a strange madness, a deplorable blindness, to excite one against the other men whom a single aim, a single indestructible sentiment, ought, amidst the most animated debates, ever to bring together, ever to unite; men who thus substitute the irritation of self-love for love of country, and who give one another over to popular accusation. . . . Me also they were ready, a few days ago, to carry in triumph; and now men are proclaiming in the streets 'the great treason of the Count de Mirabeau.' . . . I did not need this lesson to know that there is but a short distance from the Capitol to the Tarpeian rock."

And presently, in a still more vehement outbreak, in an outburst of oratorical passion which is almost without a rival in the more moderate phases of the earlier Revolution, the falling statesman proudly vindicates his past career, and flings down his last gauntlet to his adversaries:—

"He who is conscious of having deserved well of his country, and above all of being still useful to it; he who does not grasp at a vain notoriety, and who scorns the success of a day in comparison with genuine glory; he who will tell the truth, and who will work for the public good irrespective of popular opinion;—this man carries within him the recompense of his services, the solace of his pains and the reward of his dangers; he need but await his harvest, his destiny—the only one which concerns him—from time, the incorruptible judge who does justice to all. Let those who were eight days ago foretelling my opinion without knowing it, who are now speaking evil

of my speech without understanding it, accuse me of offering incense to impotent idols at the moment when they are overthrown, or of being the base hireling of men whom I have not ceased to combat; let them denounce as an enemy of the Revolution the man who has, it may be, not been unserviceable to it, and who, even if that Revolution did not redound to his credit, would in it alone find his security; let them hand over to the fury of the deluded people him who for twenty years has fought against oppressions of every kind, and who spoke to Frenchmen of liberty, of constitution, of resistance, when his base calumniators[1] were sucking the milk of courts, and living amidst all the dominant prejudices. What matters it to me! These blows from beneath will never check me in my career. I shall say to them: Answer if you can; and then calumniate as much as you please."

This is noble in form, and it might appear equally noble in fact; but it is impossible to doubt that Mirabeau was really in the pay of the court. He was poor; he had betrayed his weakness in a famous aphorism: "petty morality kills the grand morality;" but surely it must have occurred to him that the crisis was precisely one in which it was a glory to be both great and poor, and a fatal disgrace to become rich through becoming great. He fell, and deserved to fall; but it may be that the catastrophe to his country was as serious as the catastrophe to himself. Not alone his speeches and his earlier conduct, but his correspondence,[2] and the testimony of his contemporaries, show that he had the necessary gifts of a statesman, and that he might have been strong enough to govern his country well. His weakness lay in his lack of moral purpose and perseverance; and it was a ruinous weakness for the pilot of a revolution which was before all things moral in its tendency. He did not long survive his discredit, and the universal sorrow displayed upon his death in 1791, at the moment when the country's crisis was at its height,

[1] Mirabeau no doubt here refers to Charles de Lameth.

[2] Especially with Count de la Marck.

proved that, with a happier fate, he might have lived to redeem all that he had lost.

Cazalès,[1] on the "extreme Right" of the National Assembly, though he was as courageous in the expression of his opinions as the abbé Maury, had neither the talent to rival the abbé's eloquence nor the good fortune to please the party for which he so long maintained so unequal a contest. When he was forced at last to follow the earlier aristocratic *émigrés* into exile, he was met with coldness, and denounced as a traitor to his class, apparently for the sole reason that he had sat in the Assembly in the hope of moderating its counsels. He had indeed scarcely attempted to conciliate his colleagues; insisting upon the necessity of a monarchy, the virtues of a dictatorship which should (from his own point of view) "silence the laws in order the better to preserve liberty," protesting against the use of the terms "aristocracy" and "democracy," and alleging with too great boldness—and, as events proved, with too little accuracy—that France had become, by the Revolution, the feeblest country in Europe. Few of his speeches remain to us, and these do not attest any considerable oratorical power. But his advocacy of the old *régime* did not rest content with words. He fought a duel with Barnave; and one of the songs of the day bears witness to the disappointment of his friends at its inconclusive result.[2]

§ 2. Republican Pamphleteers.

We have seen how the ideas of the Revolution were translated into words: let us inquire as to the form which they gave

[1] 1752-1805.

[2] Si Cazalès n'a pas mis Barnave au tombeau,
C'est qu'il ne peut du ciel éviter la vengeance,
Et qu'il ne doit périr que des mains du bourreau.

to literary documents. Writing is more unfettered, and at the same time more deliberate, than speech; it is likely to be impressed with a greater genuineness, with less rashness and more impartiality. It is not the off-hand declaration of sentiment poured into the ears of an impatient mob; and it is produced, as a rule, with the knowledge that the moment of its publication can be chosen at leisure, and the personality of its author, if necessary, concealed. Though, as has been said, the orators stand forth more prominently, between 1789 and the end of the century, than men of letters, still the Revolution was not made without these; and whether we regard the satirists, the journalists, or the authors of more solid literary work, these few years are very far from being a blank. Amongst the many talkers of the Assembly one man stood out as a silent man *par excellence;* and it was of him, the abbé Sieyès,[1] that Mirabeau declared his silence to be a public calamity. But if Sieyès could not, or would not speak, he wrote some of the most potent words which proceeded from the mouths of his colleagues; and of Mirabeau in particular. As a writer Sieyès was bold, logical, direct between the premiss and the conclusion; as a politician he was circumspect and even timid. One of the few eminent Frenchmen who steered a clear course from the taking of the Bastille to the conferment of dictatorial power upon Napoleon Bonaparte; a man with scarcely an enemy and without a single intimate friend, it was he who first openly maintained that the Third-Estate of France was the French nation—an idea which it is the distinction of Mirabeau to have converted into its political realisation.

What is the Third-Estate? Such was the question which Sieyès undertook to answer in a celebrated pamphlet which appeared in 1789. The Third-Estate, according to the abbé, is, or ought to be, or at the very least might be, everything;

[1] 1748-1836.

whereas in France it had hitherto been nothing. It is a complete nation in itself; providing the whole rank and file of the army, of the church, of the law, of the administration, of every profession and trade and branch of industry. It was only from the privileged positions in all these spheres that it had been excluded; but it was capable of supplying worthy candidates for any and every post, however exalted. It could dispense with the rest of the nation, but the rest of the nation could not exist without it. Hence it followed that the lofty position from which it was excluded was its by the highest right, whilst the privileged orders were merely usurpers. Doubtless there had been exceptions. Sieyès admits, but makes light of them. "If this exclusion," he proceeds, "is a social crime against the Third-Estate, can it at least be said that it is serviceable to the public good? What! are not the effects of monopoly well known? If it discourages those whom it repels, do we not know that it deteriorates those whom it favours? Do we not know that every work which is exempt from competition will be made more expensively and more indifferently?" Sieyès has no pity on the classes which he proves to be occupying a false position. His logic crushes them, and it is pressed home. "It is enough to have shown that the alleged usefulness of a privileged order in the public service is but a chimera; that without it all that is toilsome in this service is performed by the Third-Estate; that without it the higher positions would be incalculably better filled; that they ought naturally to be the lot and the recompense of recognised talents and services; and that, if the privileged have usurped all lucrative and honourable posts, this is at once a hateful crime against the generality of citizens and a treason to the commonwealth."

We see what must be the practical conclusion from such reasoning; nothing short of the abolition of the useless orders. "If the privileged order were removed, the nation

would not be so much the less, but so much the more. For what is the Third-Estate? Everything, but everything that is fettered and oppressed. What would it be without the privileged order? Everything, but everything that is free and flourishing. Nothing can proceed without it; all would proceed infinitely better without the other." With such a nobility as that of France in 1789, this argument was irresistible; for Sieyès was justified in describing the privileged order in his day as "really a people apart, but a false people, which, being unable for lack of useful organs to exist by itself, has become attached to a real nation, like those vegetable excrescences which can only live by the sap of the plants which they exhaust and dry up." Nevertheless, Sieyès did not actually demand the suppression of the aristocracy. That came soon enough, and mainly by its own fault. The demands of the abbé, in the speech which Arthur Young heard him read in the Assembly on the 15th of June 1789, simply proposed "to declare the assembly the representatives known and verified of the French nation, admitting the right of all absent deputies (the nobility and clergy) to be received among them on the verification of their powers." Mirabeau would have gone further, for Sieyès' formulated proposal did not go as far as his logic. He had, however, done enough; he had substituted the new France for the old.

Sieyès became later on president of the Emperor Napoleon the First's senate, was created count, and died at Paris at the age of eighty-eight years. Wherever he may have drawn the line in his own public actions, he could not draw it for his disciples during the Revolution; and every champion of liberty in France became then his disciple. His treatise did more than anything else to push forward the minds of his countrymen upon the path which had been opened before them; there was not a single ardent patriot who did not feel the full effect of the argument so ably expounded. Privilege

in the state was doomed; the judgment of the aristocracy was signed, sealed, and delivered; the absolute monarchy of the Third-Estate was established. The oracle had spoken, the afflatus had been given; and thenceforth it mattered little that Sieyès, or any one else, should hold his tongue or his pen. There were, indeed, many more who were ready to speak and to write; and amongst them a fiery, somewhat idealistic, but powerful and courageous advocate of the Republic, Camille Desmoulins;[1] one of the first men of the age who openly urged his compatriots to dispense with the monarchy. If La Boétie had been born in the eighteenth century, under a hateful tyranny, one of five-and-twenty million victims of a handful of selfish kings and minions, he might have been just such a man. A classical student, who had contracted from the history of ancient Greece and Rome the insatiable thirst for liberty, and the indomitable courage to pursue and to conquer it, who felt the strength of his persuasive powers, and who engrafted his own ardent faith upon the souls of all with whom he came in contact:—such was Camille Desmoulins, who wrote two pamphlets, *Philosophy to the French People* and *Free France*, before the meeting of the States-General, whereto the young lawyer had been sent by the electors of Paris, and wherein he acted for some time as Mirabeau's secretary. More a writer than a speaker, he produced between November 28, 1789, and August 15, 1791, a sort of journal of passing events, issued from time to time in fly-sheets, under the title of *Revolutions of France and Brabant*. His best style almost disappears in these latter productions, which abound in violent invectives, not only against those who hindered the establishment of the Republic, but against such as would have founded it on a basis differing from that which he approved. During the Reign of Terror, himself at last a victim of suspicion and invective, he wrote

[1] 1762-1794.

The Old Cordelier, a biting satire in his earlier style, which helped to bring him to the scaffold.

Desmoulins, at his best, is wonderfully strong and nervous; his rhetoric is jerky, full of climax, of insistance and accumulation, pouring along in a rapid stream, carrying his reader breathless to the close of his most declamatory passages. Over and over again the paragraphs of his *Free France* read like the dictation of conditions of surrender to a besieged town. He cries in one place,

"No more magistracy for money, no more nobility for money, no more inherited nobility, no more pecuniary privileges, no more hereditary privileges, no more *lettres de cachet*, no more decrees, no more arbitrary interdicts, no more secret criminal procedure. Liberty of trade, liberty of conscience, liberty to write, liberty to speak. No more oppressive ministers, no more plundering ministers, no more vice-despot intendants, no more judgments by commission, no more Richelieus, no more Terrays, no more Laubardemonts, no more Catherines de Medici, no more Isabellas of Bavaria, no more Charles' the Ninth, no more Louis' the Eleventh, no more shops for place and honour at the Dubarrys and Polignacs. All the dens of thieves shall be destroyed, that of the *rapporteur* and that of the attorney, those of the stock-jobbers and the monopolists, of the auctioneers, and of the sham-brokers. The quashing of the council which has quashed everything. The extinction of the Parliaments which have registered, decreed, torn so much, and been so much my-lorded—let their very name and memory perish. Suppression of the arbitrary tribunal of the marshals of France. Suppression of the tribunals of exception. Suppression of the manorial courts. The same law for everybody. Let all books of feudal jurisprudence, fiscal jurisprudence, jurisprudence of the tithes, jurisprudence of the chase, make up the fire of next St. John's Day. That indeed would be a bonfire, and the grandest ever given to the people. . . . Yes, all this good will come about; yes, this happy revolution, this regeneration will be accomplished; no power on earth is able to prevent it. Sublime result of philosophy, of liberty, and of patriotism! We have become invincible."

It was a fact, and all France perceived it; for the army shared the popular intoxication, and without a *coup d'état* the people must necessarily be supreme. When the Bastille fell, Desmoulins was one of the first to enter it. On the 4th of August 1789, the duke de Noailles himself proposed the redemption of feudal rights and the suppression of personal services. The duke du Châtelet proposed the conversion of the tithes into a pecuniary tax. The bishop of Chartres proposed the suppression of the exclusive game-laws; the count de Virieu that of small pigeon-houses and dovecots. Other long-standing abuses shared the same fate; the nobility and higher clergy, or at least such of them as had not yet deserted their posts, vied amongst themselves in the eagerness with which they stripped themselves of the least just of their ancient privileges.[1]

Desmoulins raises a cry of joy so fervid, so ecstatic, that it deserves to be quoted as being perhaps the most exalted passage of the rhetoric of the Revolution. He writes:

"'*Haec nox est*,' this night we have escaped from our miserable Egyptian bondage. This night has exterminated the wild boars, the rabbits, and all the vermin which devours our crops.[2] This night abolished the tithes and perquisites of the clergy. This night has abolished the annates and dispensations, has taken the keys of heaven from an Alexander VI., and given them to good conscience. . . . O night disastrous to the great chamber, the registrars, the bailiffs, the attorneys, the secretaries, the under-

[1] F. A. Mignet, *Histoire de la révolution française*, ch. i.

[2] Writing on the 30th of August 1788, Arthur Young says:—"For a few days past I have been pestered (about Orange, Lille, Orgon, etc.), with all the mob of the country shooting: one would think that every rusty gun in Provence is at work, killing all sorts of birds; the shot has fallen five or six times in my chaise and about my ears. The National Assembly have declared that every man has a right to kill game on his own land; and advancing this maxim so absurd as a declaration, though so wise as a law, without any statute or provision to secure the right of the game to the possessor of the soil, according to the tenor of the vote, have, as I am everywhere informed, filled all the fields of France with sportsmen to a great detriment."

secretaries, the solicitous beauties, porters, valets, advocates, people of the royal household, all the tribe of rapine! Night disastrous to all the blood-suckers of the state, the financiers, the courtiers, the cardinals, archbishops, abbés, canonesses, abbesses, priors, and sub-priors. . . . But O night delightful, *O verè beata nox*, for a thousand young recluses, Bernardines, Benedictines, Visitandines, when they shall be visited by the Bernardine, Benedictine, Carmelite fathers! . . . O happy night for the merchant, to whom freedom of trade is assured! Happy for the artisan, whose industry is free and his ardour encouraged, who will no longer work for a master, and will himself receive his wages! Happy for the cultivator, whose property returns him at least one-tenth more by the suppression of the tithes and feudal rights! Happy, in short, for all, since the barriers which closed almost every road to honour and employment are forced and broken down for ever, and there exist between Frenchmen no longer any distinctions save those of virtue and talent."

Camille Desmoulins was a literary descendant of the ancient classical historians and orators; and this passage shows him, further, to be a foster-brother of Rabelais. It would have shown it still more distinctly if it had not seemed advisable to omit the most malicious strokes of a pencil which drew for an age more comprehensive in its tastes than the present one. His satire, always trenchant, was sometimes a little too pungent for the nineteenth century; but here is a castigation of the organised tyranny of Robespierre and his fellow Jacobins which has rarely been surpassed. He is overtly describing the condition of Rome under the Cæsars, after the manner of Tacitus; but in reality it is of Paris and the Terrorists that he writes. That, to begin with, is half the satire; the remainder is filled in in detail.

"It was necessary to show joy at the death of a friend, of a relative, if one would not run the risk of perishing oneself. Men feared lest fear itself should render them culpable. Everything gave umbrage to the tyrant. If a citizen was popular, he was

a rival of the prince, who might stir up civil war. Suspected. If on the other hand one eschewed popularity, and clung to one's own fireside, this retired life made you the object of remark ; you had been bidding for consideration. Suspected. Were you rich ; there was imminent danger of the people being corrupted by your bribery. Suspected. Were you poor; what! invincible emperor, we must watch this man more closely. There is no intriguer like him who has nothing. Suspected. Were you of a gloomy or melancholy turn, or careless in your dress ; the cause of your dejection was the good state of public affairs. Suspected. If, again, a citizen indulged in high living and indigestions, he was only rejoicing because the emperor had had that attack of gout, which was fortunately a trifle ; we must make him feel that his majesty is still in the vigour of life. Suspected. Was he virtuous and austere in his manners ; good! A new Brutus, who presumed, by his pallor and his Jacobin's wig to reproach an amiable and well-curled court. Suspected. Was he a philosopher, an orator, or a poet ; it was very becoming to have more renown than those who governed! Could it be suffered that more attention should be paid to the author on the fourth story than to the emperor in his state-box? Suspected. And to all these suspected ones the prince sent orders to summon their physician or apothecary and choose, within twenty-four hours, the kind of death that pleased them most. . . . The death of so many commendable citizens seemed a smaller calamity than the insolence and scandalous fortune of their murderers and denunciators. Day by day the informer, sacred and inviolable, made his triumphal entry into the dwellings of the dead, and carried off some valuable inheritance. Denunciation was the only means of getting on in the world. . . . As were the accusers, so were the judges. The tribunals, protectors of life and property, had become butcheries, where what was called punishment and confiscation was but plunder and assassination."

The satirist was not careful to maintain his transparent cloak to the end.

" It is for those who, reading these graphic pictures of tyranny, may have found in them any unhappy resemblance to their own

conduct, to lay them to heart and correct it; for it will never be believed that the portrait of a tyrant, drawn by the hand of the greatest painter of antiquity, and by the historian of philosophers, can have become the life-sketch of Cato and Brutus, and that that which Tacitus called despotism, and the worst of governments, can, eighteen centuries later, be called in our days liberty, and the best of all possible states of existence."

Camille Desmoulins did his best to check the mad rage displayed by the popular leaders in the later phases of the Revolution. He urged the formation of a "Committee of Clemency," as the best means of conciliating parties and putting an end to the public distrust. But he was unable to struggle against the powerful Committee of Public Safety, to whose jealousy and resentment he at length fell a victim. Amongst those who at the same time withstood the excesses of Robespierre,[1] Saint-Just,[2] and their friends, were Fabre d'Eglantine,[3] de Lacroix,[4] and Bourdon de l'Oise,[5] who laboured to bring about a coalition between the Montagne—the ultra-republican party—and the Right in the Assembly, in order to maintain its independence. It was but one of a thousand intrigues of a period during which the possession of power was reserved for the bold and the violent, and whereof the literature is comprised chiefly in the newspapers of the time.[6]

[1] 1758-1794. [2] 1767-1794. [3] 1755-1794. [4] 1754-1794. [5] Died in 1797.

[6] To the two or three Parisian journals existing at the beginning of 1789, that year added no less than eighteen, besides minor ephemeral sheets without number. Eight more, of greater or less pretension, were added in 1790; five in 1791, and twelve in 1792. The tempestuous year which succeeded contributed only two papers of note—the *Journal de la Montagne*, written by Laveaux, Thomas Rousseau, and others; and *Le Rougiff* of Geffroy. It is, moreover, a significant literary fact that, of the forty-three newspapers founded in the years 1789-1792, only twelve survived the year 1793. The best written of these short-lived offspring of the Revolution were the two papers already mentioned, edited by Desmoulins; *La Chronique de Paris*, conducted by Condorcet, Millan, Noel, and others; *L'Ami du Peuple*, by Marat; *Le Journal des Débats*, by Barrère, Louvet, and their coadjutors; *L'Orateur du Peuple*, by

§ 3. Royalist Pamphleteers.

Rivarol,[1] who for two years conducted the newspaper *Les Actes des Apôtres* in the interest of the monarchy, and who, unpopular as was his cause, added to his work such a charm of wit and brilliancy as to rival the *Revolutions of France and Brabant,* directed his satire at first and chiefly against Mirabeau ; and it is characteristic of the great dislocation of ideas and social ties during the epoch of the Revolution that Mirabeau's brother, nicknamed Mirabeau Tonneau,[2] was amongst the fellow-labourers of Rivarol. He was further assisted by Champcenetz,[3] Lally-Tollendal,[4] the Count de Montlosier,[5] and others of minor note ; and the gallant band fought for some time with great vigour and effect for the declining cause of monarchy, whose speedy downfall they were not able to foresee or willing to anticipate. It was, once again, the natural French weapon in the hands of Frenchmen, satire of the most delicate kind, alternating with satire of a kind by no means delicate, irony, *persifflage,* innuendo, suggestion which cut and wounded to the quick, and which was more formidable, and consequently more resented, than the most outrageous invective or the most severe logic.

The first number of the *Acts of the Apostles* consisted of "the Introduction," and was published on the 2d of November 1789. Mirabeau is here described under the name of Marcel,

Marat and Fréron, *Le Patriote Français* ; by Brissot, *Les Révolutions de Paris,* by Prudhomme ; *La Bouche de Fer,* by Anacharsis Clootz ; *La Grande Joie du Père Duchêne,* by Hébert ; *Le Défenseur de la Constitution,* by Robespierre—all these being Republican ;—and *Les Actes des Apôtres,* by Rivarol, Peltier, and their friends ; *L'Ami du Roi, La Feuille du Jour,* by Parisot ; and the *Nouvelles Politiques,* contributed to by Morellet and others –these being Royalist in their tendency.

[1] 1753-1801. [2] 1754-1792. [3] 1759-1794.
[4] 1751-1830. [5] 1755-1838.

and the picture is an etching in the true style of eighteenth-century art. "A short stature, no dignity of bearing, no grace of attitude, a bilious hue, a corpse-like figure, with haggard eyes, livid cheeks, a twitching mouth, a shaggy brow, bristly hair, a gnarled neck, short arms, legs sadly shrunken, a harsh low voice in the diapason of seductiveness, or horribly resonant in the accents of rage; this was what drew the gaping mob after him."

Of the Duke d'Orléans[1] the satirist writes: "As extremes meet, and nature delights in contrasts, I am every way induced to believe that Charles the Bad had united his lot with that of an amiable and virtuous princess, but that, strange to the charms of sensibility, he continually prostituted his dignity by the basest excesses; that the characteristics of the wife, a masterpiece of candour and modesty, formed a complete contrast with the figure, stunted by debauchery, which distinguished her ignoble husband."

Such was the spirit with which Rivarol entered the arena; and if he did not always fight with a bludgeon, his blows were rarely less vigorous than these. His attack on the Jansenist Camus,[2] an upright though a violent controversialist, whose crimson complexion had earned for him the nickname of *drapeau rouge*, was still more open and bitter.

"The immoderate use of wine, whilst it has weakened the head of M. Camus, has prodigiously coloured his face; moreover, he has very little wit and a great eagerness to talk; for, never finding soon enough the foolish things which he wishes to say, and the insult which he is minded to retort, he cannot get rid of his anger, which has necessarily disordered his judgment and inflamed his colour. Finally, he is an outrageous Jansenist, and the heat of intolerance which consumes his soul illumines his face; it is no wonder, therefore, if he is red, very red, as red as a flag; but it is the only connection which exists between them,

[1] 1747-1793. [2] 1740-1804.

and to be convinced of it one need only cast one's eyes on the effects which they produce. The red flag is only unfurled in order to terrify the wicked, to restrain the seditious, to suppress revolts, to restore order, and to preserve the city from pillage, murder, and incendiarism. M. Camus, on the other hand, only shows himself, acts, and speaks, in order to frighten the good, to create trouble, to sow discord, to increase agitation, to mislead the people, to conduct them to new excesses, and to turn them upon new victims."

Amongst Rivarol's assistants should also be mentioned two lawyers of honest repute and more than respectable ability, whose zeal for king and aristocracy were expressed in elegant phrase, in bold and piquant satire—I mean Suleau[1] and Bergasse.[2] The former, trained to arms, found the profession of the law more congenial to his tastes, and he has left behind him a worthy memorial of his forensic skill in his *Fidelissimæ Picardorum genti,* or *You sleep, Picard, and Louis is in chains.* He was a somewhat indiscriminate satirist; or at all events he would not refrain from occasionally giving a back-handed blow to his friends. In his ingenious reply[3] to Necker's *Projet d'Observation, a Letter to the King concerning the decree of the Assembly upon Titles, Names, and Armorial Bearings,* contesting the minister's view that Louis would not be wise to resist the Assembly, and to destroy the good understanding between it and the king, Suleau attains the height of polished irony. He says—

"As though the king, or rather his council, had not already committed follies enough on his own behalf, and it were necessary for him also to cover those of the Assembly by associating himself therewith by a formal contradiction! . . . I will not speak to you of the king's dignity; we no longer waste time over these trifles; but I suppose that your republican philosophy does not go so far as to dissociate him from the bonds of probity, or from the fetters of delicacy. Now, I will ask you with what

[1] 1757-1792. [2] 1750-1832. [3] *Actes des Apôtres,* ch. 126.

force he would venture, in order to maintain at any price a perfect agreement between himself and the Assembly, to discuss seriously a question of state, which is not, in his eyes, so much as open to discussion? What is this game of connivance, this part of an accomplice, which you would establish between the king and the Assembly, in order irrevocably to despoil a numerous and distinguished class of prerogatives and properties of which he acknowledges both the fitness and the legality? . . . It is, indeed, permitted to the king to believe, but it would be terrible if he were to declare, even implicitly, that the nobility has deserved its fate, first by the inconsistency of its efforts, and again by the meekness of its resignation."

Here is a manifest bitterness towards king and aristocracy; but there is no mistaking for whom the gravity of the irony is intended. It will be, I suppose, needless to say that Suleau did not die in his bed. He was foully massacred by some of the mob of Paris.

Bergasse was opposed to Beaumarchais in the celebrated case of the banker Kornmann, as we have already seen. He was a man of substantial ability and influence, who was returned by Lyons to the States-General, and there cast in his lot with "the Right," but quitted the Parliamentary and Constitutional arena as soon as he found that the Assembly was more liberal than himself. He declared his resolution in eloquent and even convincing terms, which prove everything, except his wisdom in giving up the service of his country. He states—

"I must preserve a disgraceful silence; I must resign the sacred cause of the people, ever the toy of ambitious men who lead it astray, or of tyrants who oppress it. No, no! I will have nothing to do with it; and in order to preserve all my independence of mind, all my courage of resolve, all my force of conscience; in order not to desert like a coward the honourable post of defender to humanity and to liberty, I repeat, in the most solemn manner, that I will never subscribe that portion of your oath

which, loading my opinions with chains, condemning me to a passive obedience, whilst religion exacts but a reasonable obedience, would prevent me from successfully pursuing my favourite studies—the study of morality and of legislation, or, what is the same thing, the study of morality and of liberty."

Chamfort[1] is hardly a royalist literary man. A foundling, he was, thanks to his wit and his handsome appearance, well received and even patronised by the nobility; and not too severely criticised by the literary men of his day, thanks to some fugitive poetical pieces, two small comedies, some tales, and the praises of Molière and La Fontaine, of which the first was crowned by the French Academy, the other by the Academy of Marseille. When the revolution broke out he embraced its principles with enthusiasm, became the literary adviser of Mirabeau, but found out too late that he had no longer a friend left with sufficient money to give him a sumptuous dinner, or wealthy enough to take him out for a drive. He saw then the error of his ways, repented, and was going to be arrested, when he attempted to kill himself, first with a pistol, and then by slashing himself with a razor. He lingered for some time, and it is said might have been cured if it had not been for the imprudence of his doctor, who succeeded in doing for Chamfort what he seems not to have been able to do for himself, namely, to kill him efficaciously. His wit, which shines chiefly in his sayings, is that of a misanthropical egotist, for, to quote his own maxim, "in frequenting men the heart must either break or become hardened."

[1] 1741-1794.

CHAPTER II.

§ 1. Literature during the Reign of Terror.

When the most violent storms of the Revolution had passed away, La Harpe[1] sat down and wrote in his *Memoirs* as follows:—

"It seems to me but yesterday, and yet it was in the beginning of 1788. We were at table, in the house of one of our colleagues at the Academy, a gentleman of high position and a man of wit. The company was numerous and varied—courtiers, lawyers, men of letters, Academicians. We had been well treated, according to the wont of our host. At dessert the wines of Malmsey and Constance added to our well-bred cheerfulness that sort of liberty which does not always maintain the well-bred tone. Men had then arrived at the point at which everything is forgiven if it leads to a laugh. Champfort had read to us his impious and libertine stories, and the ladies of distinction had listened without even resorting to their fans. Then followed a flood of jests upon religion. One quoted a tirade from the *Pucelle*, another repeated certain philosophical verses of Diderot. . . . One alone of the guests had taken no part in all this lively conversation. . . It was Cazotte, a pleasant and original man, but unfortunately infatuated by the dreams of the *illuminati*. He began to speak, in the most serious tone: 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'be content; you will all see this great revolution which you desire so much. You know that I am something of a prophet, and I repeat that you will see it. . . . Do you know what will

[1] 1739-1803.

come of this revolution, what will happen to all of you that are here?' 'Ah, let us hear,' said Condorcet, with his sly and simple smile; 'a philosopher is not sorry to come across a prophet.' 'You, Monsieur de Condorcet, will die on the pavement of a prison-cell; you will die of poison which you will have taken to escape the executioner, of poison which the luck of that time will compel you to carry always with you.' At first there was great astonishment; then they laughed with the utmost gaiety. 'What may all this have in common with philosophy and the reign of reason?' 'It is exactly as I tell you; it is in the name of philosophy, of humanity, of liberty, it is under the reign of reason that you will end thus; and it will be veritably a reign of reason, for it will have temples, and indeed there will be no other temples in all France at that time save those of reason. . . . You, Monsieur de Champfort, you will cut your veins with two-and-twenty strokes of a razor, and yet you will only die months afterwards. You, Monsieur Vicq d'Azyr, will not open your veins yourself, but you will have them opened six times in one day, in the midst of an attack of gout, to be the more sure of your death; and you will die in the night. You, Monsieur de Nicolaï, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur Bailly, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur de Malesherbes, on the scaffold; . . . you, Monsieur Roucher, also on the scaffold.' 'O, then, we shall be worsted by the Turks and Tartars?' 'Not at all; as I have said, you will then be governed by philosophy and reason alone. They who will treat you thus will be all philosophers, will continually have in their mouths the phrases you have been uttering for an hour past; they will repeat all your maxims, will quote like you the verses of Diderot and the *Pucelle*.' 'And when will all this happen?' 'Six years will not pass before all that I have told you is accomplished.' 'Here are plenty of miracles,' said La Harpe, 'and you do not put me down for anything.' 'You will come in for a miracle at least as extraordinary; you will then be a Christian.' 'Ah,' replied Champfort, 'I am relieved; if we are only to die when La Harpe is a Christian, we are immortal.' 'For one reason,' then said the Duchess de Gramont, 'we women are very fortunate not to count for anything in revolutions. It is an axiom that they take no trouble about us and our sex.' . . . 'Your sex, ladies, will not protect you this time.

. . . You will be treated just like men, with no distinction whatever. . . . You, Madame la Duchesse, will be led to the scaffold, you and many other ladies with you, in a cart, with your arms tied behind you.' 'Ah, I hope, in that case, that I shall at least have a carriage draped in black.' 'No, madame, greater ladies than yourself will go like you in a cart, their hands bound behind them.' 'Greater ladies! what! princesses of the blood?' 'Greater ladies still.' . . . They began to find the jest a little strong. Madame de Gramont, in order to dissipate the cloud, did not dwell upon this last reply, and contented herself with saying in a lighter tone: 'You will see he does not mean to leave me so much as a confessor.' 'No, madame, you will not have one, you nor any one else; the last victim who will have one as a favour will be' . . . He paused for a moment. 'Well, then, who is the happy mortal who will have this privilege?' 'It is the only privilege which will remain to him, and that man will be the king of France.'"

The fiction is graphic enough to be true; for the events here recorded in the shape of predictions are but sober facts. The drama of the revolution ended in blood; and amongst the victims of the Reign of Terror were more than one man of letters from whom the world had already received much, and might, if they had lived, have received infinitely more. The new order, dawning in violence, was not to be established without many a shock; and literature, which was to reap so rich a harvest from the new emancipation, was first of all to be checked in its course, not only by the persecution and death of its votaries, but also by the partial eclipse of letters behind the constellation of social and political ideas, which passed from conception to action without pausing for the mediation of written words. The world owes special recognition to an author who dies young, whatever may be the cause of his death. The bough that is snapped might have grown straight; Apollo's wreath might have budded into its expected glories; and, at all events, that which Adonaïs has done is seldom the best of which he was capable. The French Revolution had

its Adonaïs in André Chénier,[1]—"the young swan who died strangled by its bloody hands."[2] As for La Harpe, he escaped with his conversion; but one of his fellow-guests in the mythical supper, Roucher,[3] author of a mediocre, or at least unequal poem, on *The Months*, rode to his death upon the same tumbril with the younger Chénier. La Harpe had no mercy on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whilst the earth had scarcely settled upon his coffin; he had hardly more for Roucher, who had helped to feed the guillotine. Roucher had been faithful to ideas of which La Harpe had purged himself; and the latter could not refrain from the pleasure of pointing out, in more than a hundred octavo pages, read in the Lycée, how egregiously the author of *The Months* violated some of the commonest rules of poetry, how he murdered his Alexandrines, and suffered his verses to trample each other to death. Yet Roucher undoubtedly had the soul of a poet, and the lines which he sent from Saint-Lazare to his wife and children, written under his portrait, bear sufficient testimony to the fact.[4]

It was on the 25th of July 1794 (the seventh Thermidor of the second year of the Republic) that Roucher and André Chénier met their death. The latter, who was then in his thirty-first year, had hardly printed a line, and his poems were only published for the first time in 1819. But amongst his friends he already had a reputation; they had seen much that he had written, and expected great things of him. He was born at Constantinople, being the third son of the Consul-General of France in Turkey. His mother was a witty and beautiful Greek, Santi-L'homaka, whose sister was the grandmother of M. Thiers. Educated in France, first under the

[1] 1762-1794. [2] H. De Latouche, *Notice sur A. Chénier*. [3] 1745-1794.

[4] "Ne vous étonnez pas, objets sacrés et doux,
Si quelque air de tristesse obscurcit mon visage;
Quand un savant crayon dessinait cette image,
J'attendais l'échafaud, et je pensais à vous."

care of an aunt in Languedoc, then at the college of Navarre, he displayed great taste for classical studies, the effects of which are abundantly manifest in his poetical remains. One of his earliest independent efforts was to translate a poem of Sappho into French verse. After commencing and immediately tiring of a military career, he came up to Paris in 1784, and at once found congenial friends in such men as the painter David,[1] the chemist Lavoisier,[2] the poet Lebrun,[3] the critic Palissot,[4] and the chevalier de Pange.[5] His ambition was simply to know all that could be known; he had a soul, but not a body equal to the task, even if his fate had smiled on his courage. At the age of twenty-two, a few months after his arrival in Paris, he had a severe illness, on recovering from which he spent some months in Switzerland, in the company of his old school-fellows, the brothers Trudaine. Restored to health, he went to England as secretary to the Count de la Luzerne, the French ambassador at St. James's; but unable to live in London,[6] he passed two or three years in travelling, and finally settled in Paris at the age of twenty-eight. From this

[1] 1748-1825. [2] 1743-1794. [3] 1729-1807.
[4] See bk. vi. ch. iii. § 2. [5] 1764-1796

[6] André Chénier seems not to have had any great predilection for England. After a very poetical description of sea-sickness (*Poésies diverses*, iii.), he finds himself in London without friends or acquaintances, "auprès d'un noir foyer, seul, je me plains du sort," and then breaks out against the English "nation toute à vendre à qui peut la payer," and against the English youth whom we see

> "Au sortir du gymnase ignorante et rustique,
> De contrée en contrée aller au monde entier
> Offrir sa joie ignoble et son faste grossier."

Even the English poets

> "Trop fiers pour être esclaves,
> Ont même du bon sens rejeté les entraves."

And what is worse, they are

> "Du génie étranger détracteurs ridicules
> D'eux mêmes et d'eux seuls admirateurs crédules . .
> Tristes . . . enflés . . . sombres et pesants."

But then "their sky is always full of clouds," and their "île farouche" surrounded by fogs.

time poetry absorbed more and more of his enthusiasm ; and he worked upon the ancient Greek model, without for a moment suffering his literary taste to distract him from his attachment to the new ideas of his age and his fatherland. These ideas he sought to embody in the verses which were at once the occupation and the solace of his existence, and which his modesty scarcely permitted him to show to his most intimate friends. The elegiac style especially attracted him ; he was the Chatterton and the Keats of France ; but he was at the same time an enthusiast for liberty, and he soon threw himself into the vortex, from which he was only to escape by death. Associating himself with Roucher, de Pange and others, he wrote much in the *Journal de Paris,* which took a bold tone against the tendency to anarchy on the one hand and to aristocratic reaction on the other, which were already clearly manifesting themselves.

His younger brother, Marie-Joseph,[1] was likewise a child of the Revolution ; but his ideas were not entirely in harmony with those of André. He became a member of the most violent of the clubs of Paris, the *Friends of the Constitution,* afterwards better known, more powerful, and more sanguinary, under the title of the *Jacobins,* and of which Robespierre was the most notorious leader. André condemned his brother's association with the most extreme section of the citizens, and the latter presently saw that he was being carried too far, and withdrew from the club. It was almost their only serious difference, and it has been magnified into a quarrel dishonouring to the memory of both. But if André was more moderate in his views than the younger brother, he

However, in his hymn *A la France,* Chénier says—

" Vois le superbe Anglais, l'Anglais dont le courage
Ne s'est soumis qu'aux lois d'un sénat libre et sage,
Qui t'épie, et, dans l'Inde éclipsant ta splendeur
Sur tes fautes sans nombre élève sa grandeur."

[1] 1764-1811.

was at least rash in the expression of his own. He extolled Charlotte Corday,[1] the assassin of Marat ;[2] he attacked Collot d'Herbois[3] and Robespierre, and made enemies who only waited their opportunity of revenge. He was more chivalrous still, and, whilst the nobility fled from Paris he sought and obtained from Malesherbes the task of attending upon the king in his prison. When Louis asked from the Assembly which had condemned him the right of appeal to the people, it was André Chénier who wrote the text of the letter.[4] His courage brought him into imminent danger, and at length he was persuaded to quit the capital. He passed some time at Rouen and Versailles, maintaining a most affectionate correspondence with his brother, who was at this moment engaged upon his dramas.

At Versailles André Chénier might have lived in comparative peace until the storm had passed ; but he fell a victim to an unfortunate act of generosity. A friend of his had been arrested at Passy ; he hastened thither to condole with the family ; and whilst he was in the house certain officers came to search for papers. Without warrant or authority of any kind they arrested Chénier on suspicion, and he was taken to the prison of Saint-Lazare, at Paris. In the Conciergerie at the same time was one of his elder brothers, Sauveur de Chénier, who happily survived the thirst for blood. It has been imputed to Marie-Joseph that he connived at, or was at least indifferent to, his brother's fate. Nothing could be more improbable, and by this time the idea has been thoroughly exploded.[5] Their own affectionate correspondence, the evidence of their friends, the bearing of their parents towards both, are more than sufficient to dismiss the reproach from the consideration of the present age. Marie-Joseph, though a deputy for Versailles, had for some time

[1] 1768-1793. [2] 1744-1793. [3] 1750-1796. [4] January 17, 1793.
[5] See H. De Latouche, *Poésies de André Chénier*, preliminary memoir.

kept studiously away from the Convention. He had become unpopular in the tribune, and he was a special object of Robespierre's hatred. It would have been worse than useless for him to appeal to the men in power for his brother's life, and he had the high courage to abstain from a course which would certainly have hastened André's fate. Their parents were less prudent, or less able to restrain themselves. Chénier's father wearied the Convention with prayers for the life of his son, not perceiving that the greatest kindness which could be shown to a prisoner, under the Reign of Terror, was to let him sink into oblivion. One of the judges replied to his entreaty: "What! is it because he bears the name of Chénier, because he is the brother of a representative, that for six months he has not been put upon his trial? Go, sir, your son shall come out in three days." And when the old man boasted to his friends of his success, one of them said: "May you never repent of your tenderness." The promise was sternly kept. André appeared before the tribunal, and would not condescend to speak one word. He was declared an enemy of the people, convicted of having written against liberty and defended tyranny, and condemned to death. He was one of the latest victims of the Terror; for on the day next but one succeeding his execution, Henriot and his friends brought the tyranny of Robespierre to a close. With Chénier died de Montalembert, de Montmorency, the Baron von Trenck, Loiserolles, Roucher, and others—thirty-eight in all. When the young poet saw his former colleague of the *Journal de Paris,* he cried: "You! the most irreproachable of our citizens! a father, a beloved husband! Are they sacrificing you!" And Roucher in his turn: "You! virtuous youth! They are taking you to death, bright with genius and hope!" "I have done nothing for posterity," sighed Chénier; and then, touching his forehead, he muttered, "Yet I had somewhat there."

By good fortune, the portfolios which he had left behind him in Saint-Lazare, contained his poems. A few of these possess exceeding beauty, and are full of the pathos of anticipated death.[1] What could be more touching than that ode of "The Young Captive," written from his prison?

"The wheat, while still unripe, the sickle spares;
No vat, the tender vine, through summer fears,
But drinks the morning dews.
And I, as lovely and as young as he
Although some present pain and toil may be,
To die so soon refuse. . . .

"Is it for me to die, who peaceful sleep,
And peaceful wake! who never learnt to weep
As yet by night or day.
Whose very sight makes all beholders glad,
And in this dismal place, brows dark and sad
Can almost change to gay?

"So far is life's bright pathway from its end,
That the first tree of all that o'er it bend
Its shade still round me throws.
Scarce has as yet begun life's joyous feast;
My eager lips have but the goblet prest,
Which in my hand o'erflows. . . .

"O Death, you need not haste!—begone! begone!
Go solace hearts that shame and fear have known
And hopeless woes beset.
For me Pales still has his grassy ways,
Love has its kisses, and the Muse her lays;
I will not die as yet."[2]

[1] "Avant le soir se clôra ma journée."

[2] "L'épi naissant mûrit de la faux respecté
Sans crainte du pressoir, le pampre tout l'été
Boit les doux présents de l'aurore;
Et moi, comme lui belle, et jeune comme lui,
Quoi que l'heure présente ait de troubles et d'ennui,
Je ne veux pas mourir encore. . . .

The "young captive" whose complaints André Chénier here gives expression to was Mademoiselle de Coigny, the "blanche et douce colombe" of another ode; but no doubt André had precisely the same thoughts on his own behalf, as well as some that were more bitter. Thus he appeals, from the prison, to Justice and Truth:—

"Save me! Preserve one arm
To hurl your thunderbolt.—One lover, sworn
To wreak full vengeance for each harm,
By thee, my country, borne:
What? die before my quiver all is spent?
Till I have mangled, rent,
Trod under foot and kneaded into clay
Those ruffians who with justice play,
Those shameless tyrants who would France destroy,
France! murdered, butchered, France! O thou my joy,
My scathing pen! Gall, fury, deathless hate,
(Until revenge I sate)
You are my only Gods; henceforth
For you alone to live has any worth."

There was much of promise in the longer poems, or, at all

"Est-ce à moi de mourir? Tranquille je m'endors,
Et tranquille je veille, et ma veille aux remords
Ni mon sommeil ne sont en proie.
Ma bienvenue au jour me rit dans tous les yeux;
Sur des fronts abattus, mon aspect dans ces lieux
Ranime presque de la joie.

"Mon beau voyage encore est si loin de sa fin!
Je pars, et des ormeaux qui bordent le chemin
J'ai passé les premiers à peine.
Au banquet de la vie à peine commencé,
Un instant seulement mes lèvres ont pressé
La coupe en mes mains encor pleine. . . .

"O mort! tu peux attendre; éloigne, éloigne-toi;
Va consoler les cœurs que la honte, l'effroi,
Le pâle désespoir dévore.
Pour moi Palès encore a des asiles verts,
Les Amours des baisers, les Muses des concerts;
Je ne veux pas mourir encore."

events, the sketches and attempts at longer poems, which Chénier had produced before his imprisonment rendered all sustained effort impracticable. Sainte-Beuve appreciated Chénier; and in his notes upon the fragments of *Hermès*, in which the young poet spread his wings with the hope of reaching the level of Lucretius, the critic does full justice to the materials upon which his judgment was formed, without exaggerating the merit of what was but a preliminary sketch. "André,"[1] he says, "by the collection of his known poems, shows himself, anterior to 1789, as especially the poet of pure art and of pleasures, as the man of ancient Greece and of elegy. It would seem that before this moment of public explosion and danger, when he threw himself so generously into the strife, he lived somewhat behind the ideas and the favourite utterances of his time, and that, whilst he shared in them as far as concerns results and habits, he did not engage in them with ardour and premeditation. It would, however, be a great mistake to consider him so disinterested an artist; and *Hermès* shows him to have been as fully and as warmly a man of his age, after his own fashion, as Raynal or Diderot could have been. The doctrine of the eighteenth century was, at bottom, materialism, or pantheism, or perhaps naturism, as it would be called; it had its philosophers, and even its poets in prose, Boulanger, Buffon; it was to evoke its Lucretius. . . . . Le Brun attempted the task after Buffon; Fontanes, in his early youth, essayed it seriously, as is attested by two fragments, whereof one has real beauty. André Chénier pushed farther forward than any one, and by the vigour of his ideas as by that of his pencil, he was well worthy of producing a true didactic poem in the high sense." The fragments of *Hermès* are very unconnected, and what may be called the decorative passages are more elaborated than the philosophical; so that an extract would hardly do justice to Chénier's

[1] *Portraits*, vol. v.

idea, which, as far as I can understand it, is grand rather in its decoration than in its philosophy.

Amongst the martyrs of liberty who fell victims to the frenzy of the Parisian mob or of their leaders, and who have a special claim to be mentioned in a literary record of the time, was Jean-Sylvain Bailly,[1] a genuine friend of liberty, who longed as ardently as any for the establishment of the new order, and who, avoiding the extremes of either side, incurred danger from both. It is an eternal disgrace to men like Rivarol and other champions of loyalty that they did not hesitate to hold up obnoxious men to the vengeance of the mob, whose excesses they were bound, from their own point of view, indiscriminately to condemn.[2] Bailly, La Fayette,[3] and many other men of liberal tendencies were thus significantly pointed out to the mob as fitting objects of their lawless severity. Bailly's turn came in due time. It was raining when he was being led to execution. "You tremble, Bailly," said one of the officers. "I tremble, my friend," said Bailly, "but it is because I am cold." As a man of letters he is honourably known as the author of a *History of Astronomy*. Vergniaud,[4] one of the leading spirits of the Girondin party, an orator second in parliamentary eloquence of the higher kind to Mirabeau alone, laboured hard to moderate the passions of the time, and to hold a middle course between the excesses of the Republicans and the reactions of the Royalists. He did not, like Chénier and La Fayette, seek to retain the throne. He saw that, for a time at least, it was impossible; and he did not believe that Louis XVI. was sincere in the

[1] 1736-1793.

[2] Take an instance from the *Actes des Apôtres*, a special offender in this sense. In the epilogue to lib. 241 we read:

"Tribun municipal,
Sylvain finira mal;
Et l'écharpe de maire
Par un voeu populaire
Sera bientôt, j'espère,
Converti en licou."

[3] 1757-1834. [4] 1753-1793.

compromises which he had made with the Assembly. In a celebrated speech,[1] Vergniaud puts into the king's mouth an apology for his conduct, and then proceeds to controvert its arguments with no little skill, and with all the vigour of manifest sincerity. He represents Louis as saying

"It is true that the enemies who are tearing France to pieces allege that they act thus only to raise my authority which they consider to be destroyed, to avenge my dignity which they suppose to be tarnished, to restore my rights which they imagine to be compromised; but I have proved that I was not their accomplice. I have obeyed the Constitution which bids me oppose their enterprises by a formal act, for I have sent armies into the field. It is true that these armies were too weak; but the Constitution does not define the degree of force which I ought to give them. It is true that I called them out too late; but the Constitution does not define the time at which I ought to call them out. It is true that camps of reserve might have supported them; but the Constitution does not oblige me to form camps of reserve. . . . It is true that the National Assembly passed useful or even necessary decrees, and that I refused to sanction them; but I had the right to do so; it is a sacred right, for I derive it from the Constitution. It is true, in fine, that the counter-revolution has been formed, that despotism is about to restore to me its iron sceptre, that I will crush you with it, that you are about to fawn upon me, that I shall punish you for the insolence of wishing to be free; but I have done all that the Constitution prescribes, no act has come from me that the Constitution condemns. It is therefore inadmissible to doubt my fidelity to it, my zeal for its defence."

What Vergniaud conveyed was that Louis had suffered the Assembly to exhibit its weakness, to become the prey of the violent and the selfish, to become abortive by the excesses of the mob, in order that the natural reaction in favour of public security might sooner or later lead to the restoration

[1] July 3, 1792.

of his own authority. He then apostrophises the king in a passage of terrible force :—

"O King, who doubtless believed, with the tyrant Lysander, that truth was no stronger than falsehood, and that men must be amused with oaths as we amuse children with playthings ; who pretended to love the laws only to preserve the power which would enable you to defy them ; the Constitution only that it might not hurl you from the throne where you wished to remain in order to destroy it ; the nation, only to assure the success of your perfidies by inspiring it with confidence ! do you think to abuse us now by hypocritical protestations ? Do you think to put us off the track about the cause of our misfortunes by the artifice of your excuses and the audacity of your sophistries ? Was it to defend us that you opposed to foreign soldiers forces whose inferiority left not even a doubt of their defeat ? Was it to defend us that you set aside the plans tending to strengthen the country at home, or prepared resistance against the time when we should have become the prey of tyrants ? Was it to defend us that you did not check a general who was violating the Constitution, but fettered the courage of those who were serving it ? Was it to defend us that you ceaselessly paralysed the government by the continual disorganisation of the ministry ? Did the Constitution leave to you the choice of ministers for our good or for our ruin ? Did it make you head of the army for our glory or our shame ? Did it, in short, give you the right of sanction, a civil list, and so many great prerogatives, that you might constitutionally destroy the Constitution and the Empire ? No, no. Man whom the generosity of Frenchmen could not move, man whom the love of despotism alone could render sensitive ! you have not fulfilled your constitutional vows. It may be that the Constitution is overturned, but you will not reap the fruit of your perjury ! You did not oppose by a formal act the victories which were won in your name against liberty, but you will not gather the fruit of these unworthy triumphs ! You are no longer anything to this constitution which you have so unworthily violated, for this people which you have so basely betrayed !"

It was not many days after this outbreak of inspired passion,

on the 11th of July, that the Assembly declared the fatherland in danger, and sent the regular troops away from Paris. The manifesto of the duke of Brunswick was published on the 25th of the same month. On the 13th of the following month the king was incarcerated in the Temple, which he only left to perish on the scaffold.[1] When the September massacres took place there were none who protested more indignantly than the Girondins, than Vergniaud himself, who repeated on many subsequent occasions the fervid declamations by which his oratory is distinguished. Buzot,[2] Gensonné,[3] Guadet,[4] friends and colleagues of Vergniaud, belonged to the same political party, and took the tone of their eloquence from their leader. Madame Roland[5] has left us spirited descriptions of them all. Of Buzot she says: "An impassioned student of nature, feeding his imagination on all the charms which it can present, his soul with principles of the most touching philosophy, he seems made to enjoy and to obtain domestic happiness. . . . The generality of men, who depreciate what they cannot attain to, treat his penetration as raving, his warmth as passion, his powerful ideas as diatribes, his opposition to every kind of excess as a revolt against the majority. He was accused of royalism, because he pretended that morals were necessary in a republic, and that nothing ought to be neglected to obtain or improve them; of calumniating Paris, because he abhorred the massacres of September, and attributed them merely to a handful of cut-throats hired by brigands; of aristocratic leanings, because he would have summoned the people to the exercise of its sovereignty in the trial of Louis XVI.; of federalism, because he demanded the maintenance of equality between all the departments, and protested against the municipal tyranny of a usurping commune. These were his crimes."

[1] January 21, 1793. [2] 1760-1794. [3] 1758-1793.
[4] 1758-1794. [5] 1754-1793.

They were the crimes of André Chénier, of Guadet, and Gensonné, and of the Girondists as a party. "Guadet and Gensonné," Madame Roland says again, "love each other, perhaps because they do not resemble each other. The latter is as cold as the former is impetuous, but the flashes of his ardent vivacity are never followed by bitterness, and the intention to offend is far from his mind. Nature made Guadet an orator; Gensonné made himself a logician; the one often loses in deliberation the time which he should employ in action; the other dissipates in happy actions, but short and transitory, a warmth which ought sometimes to be concentrated, and always to be more sustained, in order to produce a durable effect. . . . Gensonné, useful in discussion, which, nevertheless, it is his failing to protract too long, has laboured upon committees, and revised a part of the plan of a proposed constitution. His speech upon the king is relieved by passages of that sarcasm which is rendered keen by an apparent coldness, and which the men of the Mountain will never forgive him."

Let us take one more picture from Madame Roland, that of another member of the Girondist party, and one of its best orators, Louvet,[1] first the friend, then the resolute and courageous opponent of Robespierre, who nevertheless found it necessary to flee before the coming storm, and who by that means only contrived to cheat the guillotine. "Short, spare, of mean appearance and negligent habit, he seems a nobody to ordinary people, who do not remark the nobility of his brow, and the fire which lights up his eyes and his face at the expression of a great truth, of a fine sentiment, of an ingenious sally, or of a refined joke. It is impossible to unite more wit to less pretentions and to more good nature; courageous as a lion, simple as a child, he can make Catiline tremble in the tribune, hold the pen of history, or scatter the

[1] 1760-1797.

tenderness of his soul over the life of a beloved woman." The praise is a trifle over-done; and at any rate, Louvet is responsible for one of the worst books[1] emanating from a writer of the revolutionary period.

Madame Roland, from whose *Memoirs* I have quoted one or two graphic sketches of the men of her time, which are in themselves sufficient to show the acuteness of her observation, if nothing more, was a striking figure in a remarkable epoch. Of obscure birth, but endowed with faculties which she lost no opportunity of cultivating, she displayed an uncommon ability, first in the convent school to which she had been sent, then in the workshop of her father, Gratien Phlipon, an engraver, amongst whose workmen she more than held her own. Her husband was a member of the Girondin ministry appointed by Louis XVI. in the last month of 1791, when he felt himself compelled to have recourse to the Left of the Legislative Assembly: Dumouriez having charge of foreign affairs, and Roland of the interior. "A man worthy of being born in a republic," as Mignet says,[2] "but out of place in a revolution, and scarcely fitted for the agitations and strifes of parties, his talents were not of a superior order, and his character was somewhat stiff; he could neither read nor handle men; and though he was laborious, enlightened, active, he would have made little mark save for his wife. All that he needed she possessed for him—force, cleverness, elevation, foresight. Madame Roland was the soul of the Gironde; around her those brilliant and courageous men were wont to gather, in order to discuss the needs and dangers of the country; it was she who stimulated those whom she knew to be fit for action, and urged to the tribune those whom she knew to be eloquent." According to the

[1] *Les amours du Chevalier de Faublas.* Louvet was, however, not thirty years old when he wrote this obscene book.

[2] F. A. Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, ch. v.

testimony of some at least of her contemporaries, she did a good deal more than this. The newspaper *le Moniteur* spoke of her, on the occasion of her death, in these terms :— "The woman Roland, a great wit in little schemes, a philosopher on notepaper, the queen of a moment, surrounded by hireling writers, to whom she gave suppers, distributing favours, places, and money, was a monster in every respect. Her scornful face towards the people and the judges chosen by them, the haughty obstinacy of her replies, her ironical gaiety, and the firmness which she paraded in going from the Palace of Justice to the Place of the Revolution, prove that no painful recollections engaged her mind. Yet she was a mother ; but she had sacrificed nature in her desire to rise above it ; the wish to be learned led her to forget the virtues of her sex, and her forgetfulness, always dangerous, ended by causing her to die upon the scaffold." She perished amidst the slaughter of her party, on the 8th of November 1793, about four weeks after Marie Antoinette. Vergniaud, Brissot,[1] Gensonné, twenty-one in all of the Girondin leaders, were led to the scaffold on the 31st of October, chanting the Marseillaise. Guadet and others of the party were executed at Bordeaux ; Buzot and Pétion [2] died by their own hands, after wandering through the country, and their corpses were found some time later, half devoured by wolves. Condorcet [3] took poison to escape the guillotine. M. Roland [4] himself, who had been proscribed, and fled from Paris, hearing of the condemnation and death of his wife, also fell by his own hand.

The woman to whose Roman strength of mind her greatest enemies bore witness said proudly, a few hours before her death : "I shall quit this world in the confidence that the memory of my calumniators will be buried in maledictions, whilst mine will some day be recalled with tender-

[1] 1754-1793. [2] 1753-1794. [3] 1743-1794. [4] 1734-1793.

ness." Her bearing towards the close of her life is thus described by one of those who had an opportunity of observing it[1]:—"Madame Roland had a republican soul in a body moulded by the graces, and adorned by a certain courtly politeness. Something more than is generally found in the eyes of women was seen in her large black eyes, full of expression and sweetness; she often spoke to us at the prison-grating with the freedom and courage of a great man. This republican language coming from the mouth of a pretty Frenchwoman, for whom the scaffold was being prepared, was a marvel of the revolution to which we were not accustomed. We were all attention around her, in a sort of admiration and stupor. Her conversation was serious without being cold; she expressed herself with a purity, a measure, and a rhythm, which made of her language a music whereof one could never have too much. She spoke of the deputies who had just perished, never save with respect, but without womanish pity, and reproached them for not having taken strong enough measures; she usually called them 'nos amis,' she frequently sent for Clavière[2] to talk with him. Sometimes, too, her sex took the upper hand, and it was remarked that she wept at the thought of her daughter and her husband. This mixture of natural softness and of strength rendered her more interesting."

I certainly prefer this account of Madame Roland to that which appeared in the *Moniteur*, and it will be admitted that it is at all events more likely to be true. In fact her literary remains, little as they contain of womanly weakness, bear out the more favourable view of her character expressed by Riouffe. The remains in question consist merely of the

[1] Riouffe (1764-1813), in his *Memoirs*, published in 1795.

[2] (1735-1793.) A Swiss financier and politician, who settled in France, became afterwards minister of finance, and killed himself at the moment of appearing before the revolutionary tribunal.

correspondence of a busy and honourably active life, and of the *Memoirs* which her gaolers gave her the means of committing to paper. Both *Memoirs* and correspondence exhibit her as a woman of lofty and punctilious honour, nobly faithful to her husband, who was old enough to be her father, and sincerely attached to her friends, to whom she often showed the softer side of her character in the most charming and natural traits. To one of these latter, Sophie Cannet, an old schoolfellow, married and peacefully settled in the country, she writes on one occasion :—

"Do you remember that alley on the left, less frequented than the others? It was always towards it that we turned our steps; there, wholly given up to sentiment, we used to walk in peace, one of your arms on my shoulders, and one of mine round your waist. . . . Why do we not enjoy this pleasure in some other garden? Should we feel the worth of it less, and have we nothing to say to each other? Alas! . . . Adieu, write to me; it is my consolation. Adieu, dear Sophie."

The writer of these lines was a woman of sensibility and pure feeling. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his *Emile* and the *New Heloïse*, only fanned into flame what was already a genuine heat, and the flame was, of the two, perhaps the least natural and serviceable to her. If she had lived in times of less abnormal excitement, she might have been a de Staël or a de la Fayette. As it is, she ranks as a grand and noble-minded woman, a trustworthy and spirited writer.

§ 2. The Ultra-Revolutionists.

After the list of the literary victims of the Reign of Terror must come those who, votaries of letters also, were fatally impelled through political fanaticism to sacrifice

youthful and promising spirits like André Chénier, who had been given but spare time to produce the riper fruits of their genius. Foremost in the dark group stands the man who represented more completely than any of his associates of the Convention the forces, the austere and cruel features, the quality and the defects of the extraordinary period which brought him to light and fame; Robespierre the angel, says Louis Blanc, the youngest and most powerful historian of these memorable times; Robespierre the miscreant, writes Michelet, the most poetical but by no means the most impartial exponent of historical truth. It is not within our province to decide whether he was the one or the other; some unbiassed historian may eventually clear him of undeserved calumny and divest him of extravagant praise. Our task with him is far less complex; if he was a powerful and wily agitator of the masses, no doubt can be entertained as to his comparative inferiority as an author. Robespierre's literary fame could hardly have borne his name to posterity, and it is permitted to suppose that in a man intellectually so concentrated and speculative the literary faculty lost much by being made subservient to deep political designs. The little advocate of Arras, so soon destined to become a giant in the Convention, first obtained notoriety with the pen by harmless essays and innocent songs, the latter making up for badness, said one of his earlier friends, only by the pleasing quality of the poet's voice. Maximilien-Marie-Isidore de Robespierre, like his colleague and rival Danton, was a native of northern France; he was born at Arras in 1758. The future *revolutionnaire* laboured under unfavourable circumstances almost from his birth. He was bereft at a tender age of the loving care of a mother; and his father, a barrister of some distinction, having fled from France for reasons as yet not elucidated, young Maximilien was left in charge of his maternal grandfather. Curiously enough his education was

strongly tinged with clericalism ; he was protected by the clergy of Arras, and to their intervention he owed a gratuitous education at the Paris Lycée Louis-le-Grand. On leaving school Robespierre studied law, and shortly after being admitted to the bar he returned to his native town and exercised his profession with some degree of success. Simultaneously he courted letters and wrote some verses. Arras boasted of a drinking and singing society, much of the same character as the modern *Caveau,* still in existence in Paris, whereof Robespierre was a noted ornament. The members were recruited in the ranks of the *bourgeoisie* and even of the nobility ; magistrates did not disdain to leave gravity at the door and indulge in the lighter arts over the festive board ; officers avoided there the *ennui* of garrison life ; and history informs us that Carnot was one of Maximilien-Robespierre's gayest companions. The young advocate became a member of the local academy of *belles-lettres ;* as such he wrote several essays on social subjects, the most conspicuous of these being "On the origin of the opinion which extends to all the members of a family a part of the disgrace that attaches to a criminal," and a "Eulogy on Gresset," proposed by the Academy of Amiens. The latter production is written in the emphatic and obscure style which prevailed towards the close of the eighteenth century. Beyond this it calls for no particular remark. The former essay is worthier of consideration. It points to the bent of Robespierre's ideas, and it often attains eloquence. The author shows himself what he was ever afterwards in politics—a faithful disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a convinced follower of his democratic principles, a resolute antagonist of Voltairian ideas. Even the style of the essay is copied from Jean-Jacques, and in some respects the pupil is not unworthy of being compared to the master, although the imitation is too palpable not to incur immediate detection.

However small Robespierre's literary merits may seem to us now, his countrymen evidently entertained the highest opinion of his capacities, and made sanguine predictions as to his future fame. Doubtless they little imagined what the nature of that fame was to be. He was encouraged to pursue his progress in the career of letters by flattering encomiums from his friends of the Arras Academy, by some of whom he was entreated, in doubtful verse, "not to deprive his head of the immortal laurels glory was preparing for him." Robespierre resisted these touching entreaties, and there is every reason to infer that French literature lost nothing by his abstention from pure literature, an abstention which he maintained ever afterwards. Besides, his attention was directed elsewhere ; revolutionary passions were brewing ; the throne was beginning to totter ; and although nothing could yet help to foresee the blood-red days of the Terror, cool and judicious minds like Robespierre's were perfectly aware that a supreme crisis was at hand. When the States-General were called together, Robespierre, esteemed and well known in his province, was naturally designated as a fit person to present his countrymen's claims and complaints ; but it seemed as if the petty barrister, poet, and essayist must remain in the common throng amidst an Assembly which numbered orators like Mirabeau and Barnave, and at first nothing was heard of him. His physical advantages were far below his apparent mediocrity ; his face was thin and anything but prepossessing ; his voice was weak although agreeable, and his figure spare in proportion. Yet, when he addressed the States a month after their meeting, his few words produced a strange and almost prophetic effect. They had been uttered in a low voice, and in a tone far from trenchant ; yet his few phrases betrayed such resolution, such firmness of purpose, that a murmur ran through the Assembly, and all eyes were fixed upon the unknown speaker. Henceforth Robespierre

rose steadily in favour and renown, and his oratorical talent, hitherto verbose and diffuse, purified itself, so to speak, and became his chief weapon in the tragical battles that took place in the Convention, all of which he won save one. We cannot, without transgressing the limits of our subject, follow him in his extraordinary career, in the course of which he immolated friends and foes in pursuance of his designs; but before taking leave of him we will quote what appears to us one of the best and most favourable specimens of his oratory—a fragment of a speech delivered on the 7th of Thermidor (July 25th), 1794, three days before his death, in answer to a deputation from the club of the Jacobins. Robespierre said—

"The revolutions which up to our times have convulsed the face of empires have had for sole object a change of dynasty or the transfer of the power of one to the hands of several. The French Revolution is the first that has been founded on the rights of humanity and on the principles of justice. The other revolutions only needed ambition; ours demands virtue. Ignorance and strength have absorbed them in a new species of despotism; ours, which has originated in justice, can only live by it. . . . I know but two parties, that of good and that of bad citizens. Patriotism is not a party feeling, but a feeling of the heart. Patriotism does not consist in transient impetuosity that respects neither principles nor good sense nor morality; still less does it lie in devotion to the interests of a faction. Withered as my heart is by the experience of so many treasons, I believe in the necessity of calling in probity and all generous sentiments to the help of the Republic. I feel that wherever an honest man may be, we must hold out our hands to him and press him to our hearts."

Would that all Robespierre's speeches had been as conciliating, and his acts inspired by such pure sentiments! Three days later he appeared on the guillotine, and died the death he had inflicted on so many others, at the age of thirty-six.

It was the fate of literary terrorists to acquire their first notoriety by the pen. Marat began by writing, like Robespierre; but he wrote a great deal more than his fellow-member of the Convention, and was known a great deal less, at least before the Revolution. Jean-Paul Marat, born in Switzerland in 1744, was neither a Swiss nor a Frenchman, but his birth-language was French. By descent he was a Spaniard;[1] his father, of noble blood, and whose real name was de Mara, emigrated to Sardinia; but having embraced the Protestant religion, he was compelled to seek refuge in Switzerland, where the too notorious Marat came into the world. Marat seems to have been singularly restless; he embraced several professions one after the other, was a novelist, a doctor, a philosopher; but he obviously retained a dominant taste for science; he wrote several works on electricity and light, as well as various political pamphlets, translated some books, travelled for some time, and was for a certain period French master in Edinburgh, where he published in 1774 a little book in English, *The Chains of Slavery,* which only appeared in French eighteen years later.[2] He was discharging the duties of doctor of the *gardes du corps* of the count of Artois when the throne fell. With rare sagacity—for this sanguinary philanthropist was remarkably gifted—he discovered the means of acquiring unparalleled popularity. Beside the horrible invitations to massacre which filled the pages of his newspaper, the *Ami du Peuple,* appeared pieces of logic and sound sense that were calculated to attract and move the masses. How far he succeeded is sufficiently well known. The hand of Charlotte Corday brought the publication of the *Ami du Peuple* to a close in 1793. Some of his first works, be it

[1] In his history of *The Origin of the Bonaparte Family,* Michelet gives interesting details on the physical resemblance said to have existed between Marat and Napoleon the First. The French historian, after minute research, is inclined to believe that the Marats, or Maras, were of the same stock as the Bonaparte family.

[2] Quérard, *La France littéraire.*

remarked, are worthy of serious notice; that on *Man* was criticised and extolled by Voltaire, and it is beyond doubt that the celebrated Cabanis employed some of the author's ideas without taking the trouble to quote him. Marat was superior to Hébert,[1] the editor of the newspaper, the *Père Duchesne*, who perished on the scaffold at the hands of Robespierre, and who had Marat's unbridled violence without a particle of his talent.

Saint-Just[2] and Danton[3] belonged to another class. Saint-Just studied assiduously in his youth, wrote doggrel verses after leaving school, and being in Paris in 1789 was suddenly fired by revolutionary faith. He was one of the revolutionaries who were most lavishly treated by nature. Tall, of an admirable figure and strikingly handsome, St. Just was barely five-and-twenty years of age when he became a member of the Convention. Two years after, he finished his life on the fatal guillotine, and in this short space he became one of the prime movers of the Revolution. Within that space, too, he published several political essays which—republished later—tended to show him in his real colours. His essay on the *Spirit of the Revolution* is good in its way. His speeches in the Convention, although imbued with the rather grandiloquent tone which pervade literature and oratory in the time of the Revolution—are eloquent and full of the most ardent patriotism. This young man was an orator and a patriot, and, in spite of his faults, is a representative figure of the Revolutionary era. So was Danton, who, through his magnificent eloquence, the sincerity of his opinion, and the greater kindliness of his nature, can claim a place beside his younger rival.

[1] 1755-1794. [2] 1767-1794. 1759-1794.

§ 3. The Theatre during the Revolution.

A revolution without a theatre,[1] such as England saw in the seventeenth century, was not possible in the France of the eighteenth. Paris least of all the cities in the world could dispense with the sights, the satires, the intellectual stimulants, to which she had been accustomed. It is true that she lost her Court when she obtained her Legislative Assembly, and that, in the absence of court and nobility, one of the mainstays of the drama was gone. But the court was no longer the centre or the principal patron of intellect and literature in the capital. For more than a century and a half, as we have seen, there had been courts and canons of taste distinct from those which ruled at Versailles and Marly; and, from the time of Corneille, Molière, and Racine, the theatres could be filled without either royalty or nobility. Thus the Parisian stage was not greatly affected by the current of tempestuous politics which raged in the Assembly and in the streets; or, if it felt any effect at all, it was an advantageous one. The men of the Revolution clung to the theatre; the acts which were passing without found their reflection within; the drama of the world, now as ever, stimulated the drama of the sock and buskin.

The first few days of the popular outbreak furnished an illustration of the fact. After the Bastille had fallen, the manager of the *Théâtre-Français* conceived a notion of giving a representation on behalf of "MM. les Gardes françaises," who had fraternised with the mob in their attack upon that symbol of tyranny and injustice. This was on the 23d of July 1789; the pieces played were de Belloy's *Gaston and Bayard*, and Collé's *Hunting-party of Henry IV.;* and the

[1] In this and the following chapters on the theatre I have chiefly followed Muret, *Histoire de France par le théâtre*, 3 vols.

house was crammed. A week later the *Comédie Française* had a still greater, though a more unanticipated success. Turning over the pages of Destouches,[1] the actors Molé and Mademoiselle Contat came upon a play which had never been considered as one of the masterpieces of the author; and it appeared to them that *The Ambitious Man and the Indiscreet Woman*, though written seventy years ago, contained parts which could at that moment be played with special appropriateness. The leading rôles were those of a couple of ministers, the wife of one of them, and the king of Spain. Don Philippe, an able and upright statesman, is brought into contrast with the ambitious and unscrupulous Don Fernando; and, as good luck would have it, the audience perceived in the former an apt parallel with the virtuous Necker, the prudent economist who then held the reins of power. They had reason for the idea, whether the management had seen its success beforehand or not. Such passages as these applied very fairly to Necker:—

> "Contented, and of good humour,
> Polite, amiable, without pride or haughtiness,
> Having no interest but that of the master,
> And ever busy without seeming so."

When one asks if Don Philippe takes pleasure in his brilliant occupation, the answer is

> "Twice he has sought to resign his power into the king's hands;
> Not that he is dissatisfied but for the sake of a quiet life.
> Happily for us the prince is too wise
> To let so good a servant depart. . . .
> He accumulates, he contrives,
> But for whom? The king alone has the whole profit.
> He aims at enriching and relieving the state:
> As for himself, he lives without pomp, without display."

[1] See bk. vi. ch. i. § i.

Louis XVI. also had his share in the applause :—

> "A prince full of kindness, of virtue, of courage,
> Discreet, wise, prudent, in the flower of his age,
> Captivating men's minds by his victorious charms,
> And formed by heaven to rule over our hearts."

Neither managers, authors, nor public would, however, have been long content with the old comedies; and the Revolution was to have its dramatists. Marie-Joseph Chénier,[1] of whom we have already heard, had twice before courted success upon the stage, once in a comedy and once in a tragedy. Neither *Edgar, or the Supposed Page,* played in 1785, nor *Azemire,* brought out in the following year, had held its own before the public; the lot of *Charles IX.,* first played on the 4th of November 1789, at the *Comédie Française,* was very different. It had been written in the previous year, but the march of events, and perhaps a little retouching here and there, made it even more appropriate to a Parisian audience now than it would have been if earlier put on the stage. As a dramatist Chénier is manifestly a disciple of Voltaire, and his literary spirit is the spirit of the age. Art had but the moiety of his devotion; he was at the same time an advanced Liberal, an ardent politician, a philosopher of the new order of ideas. He was not content with dramatising, he would teach and preach; and whilst his characters acted like real men and women, they should also convey the doctrines which had recommended themselves to Marie-Joseph Chénier. It was not a good standpoint for a dramatist; but for Chénier, perhaps, it was the only possible one.

Charles IX. was but a transparent cloak for Louis XVI.; de l'Hôpital was not more the chancellor whom we have encountered by the side of Catherine de Medici than he was the Necker of the Assembly; Coligny was La Fayette; and the

[1] 1764-1811.

struggles of the Catholics and the Huguenots melted before the heat of a revolutionary audience into the struggle between the privileged classes and the people. The king and the clergy both felt the weight of Chénier's arm; the young Republic no less surely felt the power of his championship. Who could mistake the present force of the advice given by de l'Hôpital to Charles?

"Sire, do not employ, I entreat of you,
Retz and Guise and Tavannes, and all these courtiers,
The hateful workers of the ills of France. . .
Do not for ever suffer, at the pleasure of the courtiers,
The supreme authority to pass from hand to hand;
Believe your own soul only, and reign for yourself;
And if you would have the love of your subjects,
Be king of France, and not of your court."[1]

Or who could fail to measure the significance of such lines as that which speaks of the

"Vain rights of the nobility,
Which in other days force extorted from weakness"?[2]

Both the people and the adherents of the Court understood the allusions. One of the audience has himself told us how these innuendoes, or rather these palpable hits, were received. "It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of this work," says Arnault in his memoirs,[3] "which so greatly flat-

[1] "Sire, n'employez pas, c'est moi qui vous en prie,
Retz et Guise et Tavannes, et tous ces courtisans,
Des malheurs de la France odieux artisans. . .
Ne laissez point sans cesse, au gré des courtisans,
Errer de main en main l'autorité suprême;
Ne croyez que votre âme, et regnez par vous-même;
Et si de vos sujets vous désirez l'amour,
Soyez roi de la France, et non de votre cour."

[2] "Ces vains droits de noblesse
Que la force autrefois conquit sur la faiblesse."

[3] *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire*, vol. i. p. 196.

tered and wounded the two opinions between which the capital was divided. The enthusiasm which it excited in the friends of the Revolution can alone give the measure of the indignation which it excited amongst its enemies. The court was insulted by it."

Charles IX. was perhaps Chénier's greatest triumph; but it was not his best play. *Henry VIII.* is a historic drama superior in artistic force, and more in accordance with the highest recognised canons. In the fatuous and self-indulgent king, the author may have thought that he would once more catch the popular fancy of the time; but his opportunities were manifestly not so great for this spurious kind of success as they had been in his former subject. Still less so in the person of the queen "Anne de Boulen," whom, for the sake of the requisite contrast, he had to make spotlessly virtuous. *Tiberius* perhaps approaches nearest of all his tragedies to the level of Voltaire's best; whilst *Timoléon, Fénelon, Gracchus,* and *Culas,* unequal in merit, and valuable in something like the order in which I have placed them, contain passages of great beauty and of considerable dramatic force. The character of Timoléon has been looked upon as drawn from the author's own personal features, whilst Robespierre, or at all events the Terrorists, may be regarded as typified by Timophane. In one place the latter observes:

"It behoves a magistrate, wise, active, intrepid,
Opposing to parties his invincible shield,
To confound the fury of the factions;
And liberty must reign through terror.

Timol. Let us remember that terror only makes slaves. . .
Proud tyranny, greedy of murders,
Veiling his livid face in a dreaded mask,
Shamelessly usurping the name of liberty,
Drives his bloody car through the heart of Corinth."

There is a distinction to be made between the brother of the

murdered André and the young fanatic who was one of the first of the Society of the Friends of the Constitution. It was in *Gracchus* that the lines occurred :

> "Laws and not blood! Stain not your hands.
> Romans, would you dare to slaughter Romans?"

Whereupon a strident voice from the boxes, that of Albitte,[1] a Norman deputy, cried out, "Blood, and not laws!" More noticeable still is the milder side of Chénier's character in his play of *Fénelon ;* where one of his personages exclaims :

> "God created mortals for mutual love, for union ;
> Cloisters and prisons are not of his work ;
> God made liberty, man has made slavery."

The character of Charles IX. was created, in the technical stage sense, by a tragedian whose name is more associated with the Republican and Imperial eras than with any other. Talma[2] had made his *début* at the *Comédie Française* in the Seyd of Voltaire's *Mahomet,* in the year 1787. A man of intelligence, study, and conscientious labour, he devoted himself to his art with an enthusiasm which was at that time unusual, but which was destined, in the persons of his contemporaries and immediate successors, to become a point of honour in the profession. It is related of him that, having to appear in the subordinate part of Proculus, in Voltaire's *Brutus,* he came upon the stage carefully dressed in the true costume of a Roman republican, and that his audacity took away the breath of the spectators. "It is ridiculous," cried Mademoiselle Contat; "he looks like an antique statue!" The praise was the more genuine for being unintended. Such faithful interpretations of the spirit of a play, in costume and accessories as well as in its expressions, did not long continue to be matter for criticism or surprise; albeit there were

[1] Died in the Russian campaign in 1812. [2] 1763-1826.

actors who grumbled that "one could not even have a side-pocket for one's snuff-box or latch-key, in a Roman toga." If Talma made *Charles IX.*, *Charles IX.* made Talma; for it was in this part that he definitely established himself with the public. Chénier and he, between them, made the fortunes of the *Comédie Frañçaise*, having an apt coadjutor in the young Madame Vestris,[1] the sister of Dugazon, the teacher of Talma. Talma soon became a popular favourite.

The following theatrical episode will give a very fair idea of the extremes to which party feelings were carried during the Revolution. One evening, in the summer of 1790, Mirabeau was at the theatre, when some indifferent piece was to have been played, and he took it into his head to call for *Charles IX.* Some one came forward and said that the management would have been pleased to accede to the request, but that Madame Vestris (who played Catherine) was indisposed, and another actor, Saint-Prix, absent on sick leave. The audience backed Mirabeau, and on a sudden Talma made his appearance from the side scenes, and said that the indisposition of Madame Vestris was not so serious as to stand in the way of her zeal, and that Saint-Prix's part could be read by a volunteer. This brought down the house, and the play was acted; much to the chagrin of the royalist element in the *Comédie Française*, as well as of the audience itself. The latter became expressive and unruly, and the guardians of public order had to intervene. Talma suffered for his boldness on this occasion, being expelled from the company. A few nights after the tragedy, *Spartacus* was announced. All play-going Paris was there, for they had heard of Talma's disgrace; and when Larive came forward to assume the leading part, the audience rose up and called for "Talma! Talma!" The tumult was only checked by the announcement that, on the following evening, the management would explain the course which it had

[1] 1743-1809.

taken. Next night the theatre was crammed once more. The *Barber of Seville* and *The School for Husbands* were down for representation, and the first of the two was listened to with impatience. Then Fleury,[1] the same who had proposed Talma's exclusion, came forward and said: "Gentlemen, our society, persuaded that M. Talma has betrayed its interests, and compromised the public peace, has unanimously resolved that it will have no further connection with him, until the authorities have decided upon it." Hereupon the two parties broke out into a worse uproar than on the previous night. Molière's comedy could not obtain a hearing, the stage was taken by storm, the disturbance was continued into the streets, and only ended when both sides were too tired to shout any more. On the next day the company was summoned to the Hôtel de Ville, and the mayor, the unfortunate Bailly, read them a lecture on obstinacy. They answered him warmly, and appealed to the town council, by whom they were enjoined to receive Talma back again, and to act with him. Still they resisted; more disturbances ensued, until at last the theatre was closed by the authorities. Then the pocket intervened and settled the whole dispute. The company yielded, *Charles IX.* and Talma reappeared, the favourite actor received an ovation, and the management was doubtless consoled by the magnitude of its receipts.

It was in 1790 that the Théâtre Français produced the *Awakening of Epimenides*, a one-act comedy, which was described by its author, Carbon de Flins,[2] as the first play founded on the Revolution. It was a clever *pièce de circonstance*, which contains many amusing passages. Epimenides, who had been living since the beginning of the world, had fallen asleep in the *ancien régime*, and wakes up in 1789. Utterly bewildered by what he sees, he commits himself to the guidance of a young gentleman M. d'Harcourt (Talma),

[1] 1751-1822. [2] 1757-1806.

and the honest citizen Ariste, who take him about and explain all that has happened. Louis XVI., they tell him

"The idol of France,
Has come to live amongst us;
After a few moments of trouble and license,
His august and amiable presence
Brings happiness to his quieted people;
He no longer surrounds himself with a foreign guard;
What can a good father fear in the midst of his people?
The closer one sees him, the more he is loved."

After the compliments come the satires. In the garden of the Tuileries the French Rip Van Winkle and his officious guides come upon many strange characters. One of them, Monsieur Fatras, *Anglice* Mr. Rubbish, an ex-advocate-general, complains grievously of the judicial changes that have taken place.

"To talk first of justice,
For that is the subject I am familiar with,
I have had forty years of reports and fees;
My briefs have made me bend a hundred times under their weight,
And I have worn out six gowns upon my back;
But criminal justice
Had ever its special attractions for me;
That, sir, was what I excelled in!
And they wish me to adopt a new form
For my judgments now-a-days.
They have no respect for our old decrees;
They have abolished everything, everything, even torture;
In the new procedure,
Before punishing, they prove the offence;
And until the crime is clearly made known,
Judgment is suspended.
Ah, if they are all to be believed,
None of them will be hanged.

Epim. But that seems to me very right.

Fat. That's what they all tell me."

Of laughable plot, or even of broad farcical humour, the *Awakening of Epimenides* has but a slender supply. Its interest was not intended to be more than ephemeral; but in 1790 every allusion to the striking events of the outer world was seized on with avidity, and magnified into brilliant wit.

Marie-Joseph Chénier was not the only dramatist whose characters were interpreted and created by Talma. Both Ducis[1] and Fabre d'Eglantine[2] wrote for him; and the Palais-Royal, a new theatre on a grand scale opened in the Rue Richelieu in the spring of 1790, produced within the space of a month a new five-act drama in verse from each of these authors; the *Plot by Letter* by Fabre d'Eglantine, *John Lackland* by Ducis, and *Calas* by Chénier. Fabre's comedy was successful; and indeed it was one of his best. His other plays were *Molière's Philinte; The Heir, or Town and Country.* His style is rugged and unequal in merit; his verse limps, and the elevation of his ideas is not sufficient to carry one smoothly over the ground.

Ducis had accepted the vocation of naturalising the plays of Shakspeare in France; and all that he could need in an actor was ready for him in the person of Talma. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* had already appeared in French dress, and had made little impression; but, as soon as Talma assumed the character rôles, they succeeded. *John Lackland* was less fortunate; but in the following year *Othello* took the public by storm. On the first night one of the audience cried out: "It is a Moor who did that, and not a Frenchman!"[3] It seems odd that an actor of Talma's powers

[1] 1733-1816.

[2] Fabre (1755-1794)—for the cognomen was assumed—was a member of the Convention, by whom he was appointed, in conjunction with Romme, to draw up the new calendar; a work which they effected with much success. The propriety of the names which they substituted for the old Roman appellations of the months is such as to make one almost regret their discontinuance.

[3] We shall meet Ducis again at a later stage of his career.

should have undertaken to play the young lover in the *Plot by Letter* within a fortnight of his interpretation of King John.

The year 1793 is memorable in the annals of the stage by the production of a play which created as much disturbance amongst the public as Chénier's *Charles IX.* *The Friend of Law* was an addition made by Laya[1] to the repertory of the *Comédie-Française,* which, after the secession of Talma, had changed its name to *Théâtre de la Nation,* and had shown itself more than ever opposed to the ideas of the prominent popular leaders. The *Friend of Law* cannot be called a first-rate play, but it is written with much spirit, and with the vigour which usually attends a happy *pièce de circonstance.* It was first acted on the 2d of January, just before the king was put upon his trial. Robespierre and Marat appeared on the stage under the names of Nomophage and Duricrâne, and the excesses of the terrorists were lashed without mercy. The audience, composed for the most part of men whose views harmonised with those of the management and of the author, seized eagerly upon the principal points, and the play was a great success. Judge with what reason.

"Patriots! Why, who? These intrepid cowards,
Preaching homicide from their secret chamber,
Solons of yesterday, reforming children,
Shaping their destructive dreams to laws . . .
These prudent enemies are in our midst.
They're all jugglers, patriots for an office,
Hiding their grins beneath a civic pomp,
Preaching equality, full of ambition,
False worshippers, whose piety
Is but an outer shell, hypocrisy;
These good free-thinkers, these apostate souls
Who to degrade the fairest gifts of heaven

[1] 1761-1833.

Make liberty as bloody as themselves !
But no ; for liberty, in them despised,
Has its eternal throne within our hearts.
May all these mountebanks, these popular thieves,
These shameless trumpeters of patriotism,
Rid of their presence this enfranchised earth.
War ! war on those who foster anarchy !
Tyrant royalists, tyrant republicans,
Yield to the laws ! they are your sovereigns.
Blush to have been ; blush that you still exist,
Robbers, the night has passed ; prepare to die !"

Of course the Commune,[1] the Convention,[2] the Jacobins,[3] were enraged by the audacity of the attack. On the 12th of January, when the fifth representation was announced, a decree of the Commune, forbidding the play to be represented, was everywhere stuck up in Paris. But a crowded audience assembled ; the actors read the decree of the Commune, and a fearful uproar took place. General Santerre, an ex-brewer, made his appearance upon the stage, but he was hissed, and cries of "Down with the frothy general !" were raised everywhere. Chambon, the mayor of Paris, made vain endeavours to be heard. It was resolved to send immediately a letter to the Convention and demand the representation of the play. Laya wrote also an indignant letter to the Convention, which was sitting in permanence in deliberation upon the trial of the king. There was a good deal of jealousy between

[1] The Commune was the name given to the municipal council of Paris during the Revolution.

[2] The Convention, or National Convention, was the third of the representative assemblies, elected since 1789. It began its sittings on the 22d of September 1792, at the close of the Legislative Assembly, and continued until the 26th of October 1795, when the Directory began. During that time it published 8370 decrees.

[3] The Jacobin Club—first called Club Breton—consisted of deputies and men of letters, and was first constitutional, but became afterwards ultra-republican, and supported the Mountain. It was opened in October 1789 and closed November 11, 1794.

the Convention and the Commune ; and the former, not unwilling to take a view opposed to its rival, sent word that the piece might be played. The *Friend of Law* was acted at nine o'clock that same evening before two thousand spectators, whilst thirty thousand citizens were keeping guard round the theatre, in spite of the troops and two pieces of artillery stationed in the neighbourhood, and it was one o'clock striking before the piece was concluded. The Commune thereupon published a decree ordering all theatres to be shut, but the executive council of the Convention quashed this decree, at the same time enjoining the theatres not to play any piece which might cause trouble. For the next night Vigée's *Matinée d'une jolie Femme* had been announced ; but the audience had come to hear the *Friend of Law,* and the management were obliged to compromise matters by promising it for the night following. On the 14th of January the *Comédie-Française* announced for representation Molière's *Miser* and *The Physician in spite of himself.* Troops and cannon were gathered outside, Santerre was again hooted, and the actors refused to perform the play ; whereupon a number of young men jumped upon the stage, and read the drama from beginning to end. It was not, however, again represented until after the fall of Robespierre.

The letter addressed by Laya to the Convention is full of vigour and nervous protestation, and appeals very cleverly to the self-esteem of the demagogues. "Citizen legislators!" he begins, "a great abuse of authority has just been perpetrated against a citizen, whose crime is that of asserting the laws, order, and good morals ; the decision of your committee, to which you have referred the examination of a work entitled *The Friend of Law,* has been anticipated. In this work I have supported the eternal principles of reason ; it was an identification of myself with you, and you have been calumniated in the disciple who was but repeating your lessons. . .

How will this Commune (and I denounce the act) justify the order which it has just conveyed to the comedians, at the moment when I was coming to present myself before you? This order declares that the comedians have to submit to it, every week, the pieces to be played during that week, so that it may censure, prohibit, or sanction the plays according to its pleasure! Thus the old police has just been resuscitated under the municipal scarf. How will this Commune justify itself for daring to regard and order about the comedians like servants; for having sent for them, four days ago, to rate them for proposing to play the *Cid*, whilst it tolerates in other theatres[1] the *Cid* and the *Chinese Orphan?* Has it then forgotten that the despots of Versailles used every day to see *Brutus*, the *Death of Cæsar*,[2] *William Tell*, etc.?" By the 3d of August in the same year the authorities had made up their mind, to the promulgation of a decree which defined more clearly the limits of the privilege which it was thought wise to grant to the drama. This decree is as follows: "From the fourth of this month, and until the first of September following, there shall be represented three times a week in such theatres in Paris as shall be appointed by the municipality, the tragedies of *Brutus*, *William Tell*, *Caius Gracchus*, and other dramatic pieces which record the glorious events of the Revolution, and the virtues of the defenders of liberty. One of these representations shall be given each week at the expense of the republic. Every theatre at which may be represented pieces tending to deprave the public mind, and to revive the disgraceful superstition of royalty, shall be closed, and the managers arrested and punished according to the rigour of the law. The municipality of Paris is charged with the execution of the present decree."

[1] The *Théâtre de la République* seems to have been favoured on account of its name, and the political complexion of its management. As the *Cid* contains the rôle of a king, this was perhaps a reason for its being objected to.

[2] Two tragedies by Voltaire.

On the 2d of January 1794, the convention apportioned a sum of a hundred thousand *livres* for these representations.

Laya had written before 1793 *The New Narcissus,* his first comedy ; *Jean Calas,* a tragedy ; and the *Dangers of Opinion,* wherein he attacks the prejudice of a family sharing in the dishonour of a guilty father. He wrote also several plays after his *Friend of Law,* but in none did he succeed in equalling the extraordinary success of that comedy. Though a native of Paris, he was of Spanish extraction, was elected to the Academy in 1817, and died sixteen years later.

The company of the *Théâtre de la Nation,* which seems still to have occasionally gone by its old name *Théâtre Français,* were not fortunate. Early in September 1793, owing to a new cause of complaint against them, in respect of Neufchâteau's dramatisation of Richardson's *Joseph Andrews,* under the title of *Pamela,* they were arrested and thrown into prison. One of the inferior actors, having been released, begged indulgence for his comrades. Collot d'Herbois, formerly an unsuccessful actor at Lyons, who had been hissed from the provincial stage, and who was now high in office, replied, "The head of the *Comédie Française* shall be guillotined, and the rest transported." He was as good as his word. Fleury, Dazincourt, Larive, Mesdemoiselles Louise and Emilie Contat, Raucourt and Lange, after being in prison for the greater part of a year, were condemned to death, and were only rescued by a clerk of the Committee of Public Safety, Labussière, who intercepted the fatal decree between the hands of Collot d'Herbois,[1] and Fouquier Tinville.[2]

It would carry us too far out of our line to enter at length into an examination of all the plays which were put upon the stage during the revolutionary epoch ; nor would it repay us to give more than a passing notice to such pieces as the *Pinto* and *Plautus* of Lemercier,[3] the *Marius at Minturni* of

[1] 1750-1796. [2] 1747-1795. [3] 1771-1840.

Arnault,[1] the *Death of Abel* by Legouvé,[2] the *Old Bachelor* by Collin d'Harleville,[3] and many more. Enough has been said to show how large a part was played by the stage during the most stormy period of the Revolution, and how keenly the authorities appreciated the influence wielded by the theatres upon the people. This is still further exemplified in a decree passed by the Directory on the 4th of January 1796, whereby the proprietors and managers of theatres "are enjoined, upon their individual responsibility, to cause to be played each day by their orchestra, before the rising of the curtain, the airs loved by republicans, such as the *Marseillaise, Ça ira, Veillons au Salut de l'Empire,* and the *Chant du Départ.* In the interval between the two pieces the hymn of the Marseillais, or some other patriotic song, shall always be sung. The Theatre of Arts shall give, upon every day when a representation takes place, the *Offering to Liberty,* with its choruses and accompaniments, or some other republican piece. It is expressly forbidden to sing, to permit or cause to be sung, the homicidal air called the *Réveil du Peuple.*"

The Republic had fairly taken the stage under its protecting wing; with what result the future history of the French drama will show.

§ 4. The End of the Reign of Terror.

The Terror would have yielded much sooner before the outraged conscience of the nation, whom the excesses of its false friends had driven first to despair and then to the verge of a formidable reaction, if it had not been for the valour of the armies of France against her enemies. The foreign wars not only reconciled the country to patience in regard to her

[1] 1766-1834. [2] 1764-1812. [3] 1755-1806.

internal troubles, but they provided an outlet for the national force and energy which might otherwise have been turned against the fomenters of disorder in the capital; and thus it happened that the liberty of Frenchmen was trodden under foot with impunity. The Convention, however, was able from the year 1794 and onwards to pass some really wise and beneficial measures, and to maintain the honour of French arms in the face of Europe. The struggle in the capital between the adherents of the old Mountain party, and the Girondists who represented the comparatively moderate middle-class party, was not long; and on the final triumph of the latter, their superior capacity and energy were at once displayed. The Committee of Public Safety, to whom the conduct of the foreign wars had been entrusted, received a notable accession of power in the person of Carnot,[1] minister of war, under whose direction the old system of employing small forces against isolated points was exchanged for *la grande guerre*, in which the armies of the Republic were for the first time massed together and employed with greater solidity and effect. It was now that such generals as Hoche,[2] Pichegru,[3] Westermann,[4] and Kléber,[5] began to display those military talents which forecast the genius of Napoleon, and gave birth to the aggressive spirit of the Republic. Meanwhile the Reign of Terror was fairly at an end; and if, in many instances, both in Paris and in the provinces, the champions of the old sanguinary *régime* were treated with a violence which was in itself a new and vengeful reign of terror, still the reaction was on the whole peaceful and moderate. The National Convention remained for a long time neutral, and strong in its neutrality, between the staunch republicanism of the lower and middle classes and the reactionists who favoured monarchical ideas. La Harpe, Poncelin, Richer de Sérizy, Tronçon, Marchéna, and other journalists, declared, as a rule,

[1] 1753-1823. [2] 1768-1797. [3] 1761-1804. [4] Died 1794. [5] 1753-1800.

for the latter party. The *jeunesse dorée*,[1] who had been amongst the steadiest supporters of the Convention, passed over, for the most part, to the reaction, and the democrats found themselves more and more in a minority. Nevertheless the Government was placed beyond serious attack by its victorious army. The abortive enterprise of the *émigrés* at Quiberon, where they were destroyed by Hoche, definitely paralysed the hopes of the exiled nobility; and at home the constitution voted by the Convention on the 22d of August 1795, the result of six years of deliberation and experience, was a genuine triumph for the moderate republican party.

This new constitution, which superseded the partial one of 1791, was wise and well conceived. The legislative power was entrusted to two chambers or councils, both representative: the Council of Five Hundred, which had the sole initiation and discussion of new laws; and the Ancients or Senate, consisting of two hundred and fifty members. The Senate received the proposals of the lower chamber and read them three times, at intervals of not less than five days, except in case of "urgency," by voting which it might dispense with the delay. It could follow one of three courses with respect to the legislative measures proceeding from the Five Hundred; that is, it could adopt them, or, if it considered them incompatible with existing laws, it could vote this formula, "La Constitution annule." The age of the Five Hundred was fixed at thirty, of the Ancients at forty, and both Councils were to be renewed by halves every two years. The executive power was entrusted to a Directory of five members, selected

[1] In 1795, Fréron, editor of the *Orateur du Peuple*, called the young men of Paris "to arms" in support of the Convention as opposed to the Mountain. Those who responded to his appeal belonged to the rich middle class, and became known under the nickname of the *jeunesse dorée*. They wore large coats, with deep collars folding down, of grey cloth, lined with black or green; hair long and loose, *à la victime*, tied behind with *cadenettes*; and they carried short sticks, pointed at one end and loaded with lead at the other.

from a list presented by the Lower and adopted by the Upper Chamber. The Directory was provided with a guard, was lodged in the Luxembourg, and had its civil list.[1] If any constitution could have definitely founded the Republic at this period, it would have been that of which I have quoted a few of the most characteristic provisions. But the reaction in favour of a monarchy in some form or other was too strong to be resisted. It gained force day by day, and even if no successful soldier had been found to occupy the vacant throne, the Republic would none the less have experienced the fate due to every institution which is born before its time.

Amongst the best and wisest measures of the Convention during the later phases of its existence were the establishment of the first Normal School and the foundation of the Institute. The idea of the presiding spirits of the Republic in the course which they thus pursued was similar to that which sought to produce conformity in the national drama, and which would have moulded the general education of the state upon a harmonious and systematic plan. The Normal School was not destined to a long existence; but it lived long enough to set out upon the path which had been defined for it; and it was to be reproduced under more hopeful auspices at a future time. The list of professors chosen to occupy the chairs thus provided by the State was not, thanks to the Reign of Terror, a specially remarkable one. Lavoisier, the greatest French chemist of the age, had been guillotined; Berthollet supplied his place. Condorcet had died by his own hand rather than wait for the decree of the tyrants; Volney therefore filled the chair of history which Condorcet would have so much adorned.

[1] See Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, ch. xi. The Directory (la Réveillère-Lepaux, Rewbell, Letourneur, Barras, and Carnot, elected in the place of Siéyès, who declined to serve), endured from October 27, 1795, to August 3, 1797, when it was displaced by a *coup d'état*.

§ 5. Literary Men of the Day.

Constantin-François Chasseboeuf, count de Volney,[1] was born at Craon, near Mayenne. At the age of twenty five he made a voyage eastward, in Asia Minor and on the Nile, and wrote on his return a readable account of his experiences—a *Voyage in Egypt and Syria;* perhaps the best written of his works, if not the best, because he contrives to make his subject more prominent than himself, and skilfully sinks the traveller in the traveller's narrative. A close observer and a good describer, he may be said to have opened up the East to Europe ; and in fact he is credited with having first pointed out to Napoleon Bonaparte the great advantages of the plain of the Pyramids as a theatre of war. In 1789 he was elected member of the States-General, and distinguished himself amongst the supporters of Mirabeau in the National Assembly. Early in 1792 he published his *Ruins; or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires,* which met with a great success, and earned him the fame of a philosopher, over and above that of a careful narrator. In this work he discourses upon the revolutions of empires, mingling his meditations upon the causes and circumstances of national decline with sketches, more or less graphic and picturesque, of the material ruins which illustrate the ruin of dynasties and of ideas. The description of Palmyra is perhaps the finest passage in the whole book, which is for the most part stiff, and heavy with too much preconceived deduction. The ruins of cities and empires are in fact only a thread upon which he laboriously strings his constantly-recurring negations of almost every accepted truth. Volney is not merely a sceptic, but a point-blank traverser of religious truth under all its many forms.

[1] 1757-1820.

Human creeds are, with him, universally founded in imposture; it is not enough to say that they are false, but they were falsely imposed. The effect of his meditations and arguments is depressing in the extreme; it would be the more depressing the more they were true. Under the Empire Volney became a senator and a count; and in 1814 he gave to the world his last work, *New Researches in Ancient History.*

Let us look at one corner of the canvas on which Volney has drawn the picture of Palmyra, and then read the thoughts which were inspired by it:—

"The sun had just gone down; a red line still marked his track in the distant horizon of the Syrian hills; the full moon was rising in the East against a bluish background, upon the flat banks of the Euphrates. The sky was clear, the air calm and serene; the dying light of day qualified the horror of the darkness, the first freshness of the night soothed the heat of the scorched land; the shepherds had taken their camels under shelter; the eye could perceive no motion on the gray monotonous plains; a vast silence reigned over the desert; only, at long intervals could be heard the dismal cries of a few night-birds and of a few jackals. The shades increased, and now in the twilight my gaze distinguished no more than the white phantoms of the columns and of the walls. These solitary places, this peaceful evening, this majestic scene, impressed upon my spirit a religious meditation. The aspect of a great desert city, the memory of the past, the comparison of the present, all raised my heart to lofty thoughts. I sat upon the trunk of a column, and there, my elbow resting on my knee, my head supported by my hand, now casting my looks upon the desert, now fixing them on the ruins, I abandoned myself to a profound reverie." [1]

[1] "Le soleil venait de se coucher; un bandeau rougeâtre marquait encore sa trace à l'horizon lointain des monts de la Syrie: la pleine lune à l'Orient s'élevait sur un fond bleuâtre, aux planes rives de l'Euphrate: le ciel était pur, l'air calme et serein; l'éclat mourant du jour tempérait l'horreur des ténèbres, la fraîcheur naissante de la nuit calmait les feux de la terre embrasée;

Of what sort were the meditations which a scene like this induced in the mind of Volney, to whom Nature was the true God? He says:

'It is wrong to attribute your evils to God! Tell me, perverse and hypocritical race, if these places are desolate, if powerful cities have been reduced to a solitude, is God the cause of the ruin? Is it His hand which has overthrown these walls, sapped the foundations of these temples, shattered these columns? Or is it the hand of man? Is it the arm of God which has brought the wind upon the town and fire upon the country; which has slain the people, burned the crops, torn up the trees, and laid waste the cultivated lands? Or is it the arm of man? And when after the destruction of harvests famine came, is it the vengeance of God which produced it, or the unreasoning fury of man? When in the famine the people has fed upon unclean food, if pestilence followed, is it the wrath of God which sent it, or the imprudence of man? When war, famine, and pestilence have mown down the inhabitants, if the land has been left desert, is it God who has depopulated it? Is it His greed which robs the labourer, lays waste the productive fields, and devastates the country, or the greed of those who govern? Is it His pride which gives rise to homicidal wars, or the pride of kings and their ministers? Is it the venality of His decisions which overthrows the fortune of families, or the venality of the administrators of the laws? Is it, in short, His passions which, under a thousand forms, inflict grief on individuals and peoples, or is it the passions of men? And if, in the anguish of their afflictions, they see no remedy, is

les pâtres avaient retiré leurs chameaux; l'œil n'apercevait plus aucun mouvement sur la prairie monotone et grisâtre; un vaste silence régnait sur le désert; seulement, à de longs intervalles, on entendait les lugubres cris de quelques oiseaux de nuit et de quelques chacals. L'ombre croissait, et déjà dans le crépuscule mes regards ne distinguaient plus que les fantômes blanchâtres des colonnes et des murs. Ces lieux solitaires, cette soirée paisible, cette scène majestueuse, imprimèrent à mon esprit un recueillement religieux. L'aspect d'une grande cité déserte, la mémoire des temps passés, la comparaison de l'état présent, tout éleva mon cœur à de hautes pensées. Je m'assis sur le tronc d'une colonne, et, là, le coude appuyé sur le genou, la tête soutenue par la main, tantôt portant mes regards sur le désert, tantôt les fixant sur les ruines, je m'abandonnai à une rêverie profonde."—*Les Ruines*, bk. i.

it the ignorance of God that they most blame, or their own ignorance?"[1]

The chair of philosophy in the Normal School was filled by Garat,[2] a man who had taken no inconsiderable part in the revolution, without committing himself to any act of overt violence, but who was nevertheless expelled both from the Senate and the Academy after the restoration. He wrote a volume of *Memoirs of the Revolution, or an Explanation of my Conduct in the Public Service.* This was published in 1794, and its tone may be divined from a single passage, in which he recommended that those who were worsted in the battle of politics should be expelled from the state. If his advice had been followed, doubtless much bloodshed would have been avoided; but he does not seem to have been one of those whose counsels are wont to prevail amongst their fellows. After his expulsion he made up for the apparent idleness of his life under the Empire, and was delivered of a *Memoir of M. Suard,* into which he introduced more of his

[1] "C'est à tort, que vous reportez à Dieu la cause de vos maux! Dites, race perverse et hypocrite, si ces lieux sont désolés, si des cités puissantes sont réduites en solitude, est-ce Dieu qui a causé la ruine? Est-ce sa main qui a renversé ces murailles, sapé ces temples, mutilé ces colonnes? ou est-ce la main de l'homme? Est-ce le bras de Dieu qui a porté le fer dans la ville et le feu dans la campagne; qui a tué le peuple, incendié les moissons, arraché les arbres et ravagé les cultures? ou est-ce le bras de l'homme? et lorsqu' après la dévastation des récoltes, la famine est survenue, est-ce la vengeance de Dieu qui l'a produite, ou la fureur insensée de l'homme? Lorsque dans la famine le peuple s'est repu d'aliments immondes, si la peste a suivi, est-ce la colère de Dieu qui l'a envoyée, ou l'imprudence de l'homme? Lorsque la guerre, la famine et la peste ont moissonné les habitants, si la terre est restée déserte, est-ce Dieu qui l'a dépeuplée? Est-ce son avidité qui pille le laboureur, ravage les champs producteurs et dévaste les campagnes, ou l'avidité de ceux qui gouvernent? Est-ce son orgueil qui suscite des guerre homicides, ou l'orgueil des rois et de leurs ministres? Est-ce la vénalité de ses décisions qui renverse la fortune des familles, ou la vénalité des organes des lois? Sont ce enfix ses passions qui, sous mille formes, tourmentent les individus et les peuples, ou sont ce les passions des hommes? Et, si dans l'angoisse de leurs maux, ils n'en voient pas les remèdes, est-ce l'ignorance de Dieu qu'il faut inculper, ou leur ignorance?"

[2] 1749-1833.

recollections and more of his ingenious ideas; but the interest of his books was merely ephemeral.

Necker,[1] whose name has already been mentioned as that of an able and conscientious minister of Louis XVI., was one of those statesmen and men of letters who were capable of rendering their country good service, at all events in time of peace, but who at an early period lost confidence in the power of the National Assembly to guide the fortunes of France and to control the passions of the multitude. He seems to have earnestly desired the welfare of his adopted country;[2] he endeavoured to save and to reform the old constitution, with the genuine instincts of a conservative mind. But he did not grasp the situation as early as a statesman of his experience might have done; and nothing was more natural than that he should fall between the two stools of the popularity which he courted and of the king whom he unconsciously assisted to blind. The people abandoned him, the king dispensed with his services, and still he did not hasten to leave France, to which he always remained faithful in his affections. His *History of the Revolution*, published in 1796 at Geneva, bears witness on almost every page to the attachment which he felt towards the country which he had endeavoured to govern; although it is true that he had no special good will to the Assembly which had rejected his advice, nor to the nobility which had at first obstinately refused to make concessions of their privileges, and then, when it was too late, had given up more than they had been asked for. Of the courtiers under the old *régime* he says:—

"The lavish gifts of governments, always uncertain in their nature, induce those who covet them to set a price upon their hopes; presently they reckon them amongst their revenues; they then borrow without being sure of repaying; and this conduct, which degrades them, necessarily depreciates the respect which

[1] 1732-1804.

[2] He was a native of Geneva.

they are anxious to retain. In general the taste for intrigue and the decay of manners must be a natural consequence of the new kind of life to which the nobility of France had devoted itself. The favours of a court are a tribute to skill and to the talent of pleasing, and this education of the mind is nearly always incompatible with dignity of character. The nobility, moulded by an unceasing ambition, probably began to sink in estimation on the day when, being obliged to attach a great importance to forms, it made what was superficial a serious thing, and of manners a special science."

Necker wrote, it will be perceived, with great perspicacity, and was endowed with the finest kind of irony. Add the gift of irony to a self-complacent appetite for admiration, which was one of Necker's chief personal characteristics, and you will obtain a character in which the supercilious spirit will be largely developed. When Necker speaks of the conduct of his rivals and successors in the arena of statesmanship, he is apt to dismiss too lightly the ideas and the actions of his contemporaries. At times, again, he rises to real fervour and satirical force; as, for instance, in the following passage *à propos* of the decree of the Convention affirming the existence of God and the immortality of the soul:—

"O the folly of human pride! This people is very great in comparison with the world; but France, with her eighty-four departments, and eighty-five if we count Corsica; France and the other countries of Europe; France and the entire globe, on which we are constrained to roll around the sun; in brief, the earth, and the millions and the thousand millions of planets which people the vault of heaven, are but atoms or grains of dust in the sight of the unknown Author of so many wonders. Ah, that all presidents of national conventions, present or future, would recognise kings, grand dukes, and republics, and would moreover give, if they please, and the others were willing, the fraternal kiss to all the envoys of Europe, but that they would abstain from speaking, or speak upon their knees, of the Supreme Being!"

Necker was not alone in his advocacy of, and his efforts to bring about, a reformation of the French constitution. His friend Monnier,[1] the best orator of the States-General, was also a champion of moderation, and showed great courage during his political career. When he was returned to the National Assembly, of which he became president, he was sanguine enough to hope that he would be listened to there with the same attention as he had commanded in the provinces. "Doubtless," he said at a later period of his life, "I, like so many other friends of humanity, made the mistake of forming too many hopes; but how necessarily my condition contributed to my false security! All that had passed in my province, for nearly a year before the opening of the States-General, was calculated to nourish me in illusions and to conceal obstacles. When I reflect on all that we had obtained in Dauphiné, by the sole power of justice and reason, I perceive how I was led to think that Frenchmen deserved to be free. The lowest orders of the people calmly awaited the result of our labours. The multitude never broke in upon our assemblies. The spectators always restrained themselves within the bounds of propriety, and the votes were perfectly free. The clergy and the nobility showed themselves generous, the members of the communes moderate." It is a confession of radical weakness in Monnier's mind to have imagined that France as a whole, or that Paris in particular, was shaped after the fashion of peaceable Dauphiné; but if his candour condemns him as a statesman, it reflects credit upon him as a man. The scheme which he propounded for the salvation of the country involved a strong and inviolable royalty, "responsible ministers chosen by the king"—wherein apparently he saw nothing in the shape of a fallacy—a double legislature, one Chamber composed of an open and accessible aristocracy, not subject to removal. His model seems to have

[1] 1758-1806.

been sought in England; and if it had been proposed and adopted in 1760, it might—I venture no farther—have staved off the revolution. In 1790 he was not listened to, and, like Necker, he deemed it prudent to seek an asylum abroad. He published at Geneva his best work, *Researches into the Causes which have prevented the French from becoming Free*, formed, during his exile, an establishment at Weimar for the education of the young, and only returned to France in 1801. It has been well said of him, that "he was thirsting after justice." So also was Mallet du Pan,[1] a Calvinist born in Geneva, and a genuine lover of liberty without excess. All the men of this order of thought were wise, enlightened, and fit to govern in a free country, but they all failed through conceiving that a constitution could be decreed and imposed by the Assembly without so much as a shock to the progress of the nation. They were skilful publicists in the best sense, and they erred simply in misreading the signs of the times. Mallet du Pan was not a bigot; he distinctly refused to unite in any measure of persecution against the French Roman Catholics; but the influence which he gained from the respect of his contemporaries he lost again by the stiffness of his mental attitude. Republican by birth, he aimed at finding the middle way of the crisis in which he found himself engaged; not as though he were legislating for Switzerland, but having regard to the country of his adoption. "Born in a republic," he said, "having had for twenty years before my eyes a picture of all the passions which disturb liberty, of political fanaticism, of the spirit of party, of the abuse of words and of the public misfortune, the only result of these storms, I have at least learned to distrust trenchant opinion, systematic experiments, violence, injustice, perverse or perverted judgments which are born even in necessary revolutions, as noxious insects spring into life under the summer sun. It is not at the age of forty

[1] 1749-1800.

that a wise republican who has spent twenty years of his life amidst political tempests will become the accomplice of any one's madness." Mallet du Pan's *Considerations on the French Revolution* contain much that is historically valuable, side by side with philosophical ideas of no inconsiderable merit. He was also a journalist of talent, of a lofty independence of mind, and wrote, on the close of the Egyptian expedition : "Bonaparte has his head in the clouds ; his career is a poem, his imagination a storehouse of heroic romance, his stage an arena open to all the madness of resolve or ambition. Who shall fix the point at which he will arrive? Is he sufficiently master of things, of time, and of fortune, to fix it himself?" The answer is a chapter of history.

André Morellet,[1] one of the many Frenchmen who had ardently desired the Revolution, who suffered from its excesses, and who still remained faithful to their convictions, undismayed by all that the selfish and the violent had done to discredit the name of the Republic, lived a long life full of activity and consistent effort. One of the earliest apostles of free trade in France, this liberal-minded abbé was still found raising his voice in its favour in his eighty-eighth year, in the last representative chamber of the Empire. He belonged to the school of economists which had Turgot for one of its ablest exponents, and Voltaire amongst its champions. Morellet was the friend of both ; and the latter bore witness to the independent moral courage of his friend, by attaching to him the *soubriquet* of *Mords-les*—"Bite 'em." He deserved the name by his controversial force, and by the eagerness with which he undertook the cause of justice, of common sense, of the oppressed, in the face of all opposition and personal danger. He had many opportunities of urging his opinions, especially in the *Nouvelles Politiques*, a moderate Liberal journal founded in 1792, in which he was associated with

[1] 1727-1819.

Suard, Lacretelle, and others. He wrote independently, as well, in pamphlets which were never feeble, which never struck without reaching their mark, and which were frequently attended by the result to which he aspired. He had been an Academician from 1785, so that it was not as a mere journalist that he wrote his *Vision of Charles Palissot*, satirising the latter's comedy of *The Philosophers*, or his *Theory of Paradox* against Linguet, or his *Cry of Families*.[1] The object of this treatise was to obtain a repeal of the barbarous decree whereby the property of those who were condemned by revolutionary tribunals was confiscated, and their relatives were reduced to pauperism. It was not until after the fall of the terrorists that Morellet's pamphlet appeared, and not until the Convention had refused to cancel the decree of those who had gone before them. A single passage will show the force, both of argument and of satire, wielded by this powerful pen.

"I must say it, and I must believe that I have brought to light a worthy sentiment concealed in the depth of the human heart: the refusal from henceforth even to listen to the petition of so many unfortunate families is, on the part of the Convention, a homage rendered to the justice of their cause. Terrified by the alleged dangers whereby the public credit is said to be menaced by the re-endowment of children with the property of their unjustly condemned fathers, our representatives put away from them the sight of these victims, whom they believe they have no power to relieve of their fate, in order to spare themselves a too painful sentiment. They turn aside their heads whilst they strike them. They set aside the demand of the unfortunate, because they feel that it is too just to be rejected; but this very sentiment of justice and humanity convinces me that they will not long maintain such a refusal."

[1] Lacretelle, in his *History of the Convention*, speaks of it in high terms. "Morellet," the latter says, "the judicious and powerful antagonist of every kind of iniquity, as of every kind of fiscal ineptitude, pleaded the cause of families in a work full of force and courage."

In the end the Convention had to yield to public opinion, which Morellet had roused into an irresistible activity. His *Apology for Philosophy against those who charge it with the troubles of the Revolution*, published in 1796, is an able and effective defence of the position of Montesquieu and Turgot. "Philosophy," he says in one part, "has taught people their political evils and the vices of their government, and indicated the mode of curing them; but it cannot be imputed to it as a crime that it has enlightened men on this important subject. When an evil is well known and has a sure and specific remedy, if he who administers the remedy kills his patient, through ignorance of the proper treatment, it is not just to turn upon the physician who has revealed the malady, who recommended its treatment, and who suggested the cure." In addition to the controversial works here mentioned, Morellet left behind him an interesting volume of *Memoirs*.

Count Joseph de Maistre,[1] born at Chambéry, of a family long settled there, but originally from Languedoc, has had so much influence on France that we must give him a place here. In 1793 he was made a senator of Savoy, but after the French had seized that kingdom he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Republic, and sought refuge at Lausanne. From Neuchâtel he issued, in 1796, his *Considerations upon the French Revolution*, in which the most characteristic standpoint is that the French Revolution, in common with all the agitations and operations of mankind, proceeded from a divine order and direction, and by virtue of this sanction alone overcame all obstacles. Under the Consulate and Empire, de Maistre enjoyed the confidence of the Sardinian Government, which in 1802 he represented at the Court of St. Petersburg. He resided in Russia no less than fourteen years, and wrote there his *Essay on the Generating Principle of the Constitution*, in which he

[1] 1754-1821.

lays down the principle that the divine power is the only source of all authority on earth, represented by the sovereign and the aristocracy, that the rights of the people emanate from royalty, and that it is an illusion and a danger to let them depend on a written and clearly defined contract. A couple of years before his death he had published a work *On the Pope,* which is a bold apology for the spiritual and temporal power of the Papacy. He claims for the pope, in the interests of the nations themselves, against the abuses of royalty, and as a defence against the feebleness or violence of popular assemblies, the right of being the sovereign and infallible arbiter in all political discussions.[1] He left some of the fruits of his experience in a posthumous work, the *Soirées of St. Petersburg,* which, composed of eleven conversations between a worldly Roman Catholic, an orthodox senator rather inclined to mysticism, and a count, de Maistre himself, tries to prove that man is radically degraded and never innocent; that therefore the whole of humanity must be punished; that a nation is lost which abolishes punishments; that thus "the hangman ought to have in society a grand and terrible place," though he is not principal agent of the great law of destruction; a glory which belongs to the soldier, whose functions are similar to those of the hangman. Divine war accomplishes the mysterious expiation which no human being can escape. "At the precise moment caused by men and prescribed by justice, God advances to avenge the iniquity which the inhabitants of this world have committed against Him. The earth, thirsting after blood, opens its mouth (a

[1] J. de Maistre, in his *Correspondance Diplomatique,* says, however, of the coronation of Napoleon by Pope Pius VII., "The crimes of an Alexander VI. are less revolting than this hideous apostasy of his feeble successor. . . I wish, with all my heart, that the unhappy pontiff would go to Saint Domingo, to crown Dessalines. When once a man of his rank and character forgets both so far, what one must wish then is that he should finally degrade himself so as to become nothing but a puppet, without any influence." This is certainly treating a papal final decision by no means apologetically.

Biblical expression) to receive it, and retain it in its bosom until the moment has arrived when it must restore it."[1] These Ultramontane doctrines were also maintained in two other of his posthumous works, in his *Letters to a Russian Gentleman,* in which he defends the inquisition, and in his *Four Unpublished Chapters on Russia,* in which he opposes the emancipation of the serfs and the too sudden introduction of sciences in Russia. His works are considered paradoxical, but eminently suggestive; his style is nearly always original, lively, and brilliant, though sometimes turgidly rhetorical; and many admire even yet the writings of this champion of absolutist principles who do not at all share his opinions. In order that the reader may partly judge for himself, we shall give a passage from *The Soirées of St. Petersburg.*

"Where then is innocence, I pray? Where is the just? Is he around this table? Great God! who indeed could believe in such an excess of madness if we were not every moment witness of it? Often I think of this passage in the Bible, in which it is said, 'It shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with candles.'[2] Let us have the courage to visit our hearts with candles, and we shall no longer dare pronounce, except with blushes, the words virtue, justice, and innocence. Let us begin by examining the evil which is in us, and let us turn pale whilst casting a courageous look at the bottom of this abyss; for it is impossible to know the number of our transgressions, and it is not the less so to know in how far some guilty action or other has injured the general order and opposed the plans of the eternal Legislator. Let us think then of this frightful communication of crimes which exists between men—complicity, advice, example, approval—terrible words on which we ought continually to meditate! What sensible man can think without shuddering of the inordinate action which he has exercised on his fellow-creatures, and of the possible consequences of this fatal influence? Man is rarely guilty by himself; it is seldom that one crime does not lead to another. Where are the limits of responsibility? Hence

[1] *Conversation VII.*

[2] Zephaniah i. 12.

this luminous trait which sparkles amongst a thousand others in the Psalms, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.'[1]

"After having thus meditated upon our crimes, another examination, more sad perhaps, that of our virtues, presents itself before us. What a frightful research would be that one which had for its object the small number, the falsehood, and the inconstancy of these virtues! Before all we should have to examine their foundations. Alas! they are rather determined by prejudices than by considerations of the general order founded upon the divine will. An action revolts us much less because it is bad than because it is shameful.

"It is not crime we fear, it is dishonour; and provided opinion removes the shame, or even replaces it by glory, as it has the power to do, we boldly commit the crime; and man, thus disposed, is called without any more ado a *just* or at least an *honest* man; and who knows if he does not thank God because he is not like one of those? . . . This is a madness for which the smallest reflection ought to make us blush. No doubt it was profound wisdom amongst the Romans to call by the same name force and virtue. In fact, there is no virtue properly so called without a victory over ourselves, and all that does not cost us something is worth nothing for us. Let us take away from these miserable virtues that which we owe to mood, to honour, to opinion, to pride, to powerlessness, and to circumstances; what will remain to us? Alas! very little, I do not fear to acknowledge it to you. I never think of this frightful subject without being tempted to throw myself upon the ground like a guilty man who craves for mercy; without accepting beforehand all the evils which might fall on my head, as a slight compensation for the immense debt which I have contracted with eternal justice. However, you cannot believe how many people, in my lifetime, have told me that I was *a very honest man.*"[2]

[1] Psalm xix. 12 and 13.

[2] "Où est donc l'innocence, je vous en prie? Où est le juste? est-il ici autour de cette table? Grand Dieu, eh! qui pourrait donc croire un tel excès de délire, si nous n'en étions pas les témoins à tous moments? Souvent je songe à cet endroit de la Bible où il est dit: '*Je visiterai Jérusalem avec des*

An eminent French historian,[1] in speaking of de Maistre, says :—

"Voltaire had cleverly foreseen and foretold that the last *lampes.*' Ayons nous-mêmes le courage de visiter nos cœurs *avec des lampes*, et nous n'oserons plus prononcer qu'en rougissant les mots de vertu, de justice, et d'innocence. Commençons par examiner le mal qui est en nous, et pâlissons en plongeant un regard courageux au fond de cet abîme ; car il est impossible de connaître le nombre de nos transgressions et il ne l'est pas moins de savoir jusqu'à quel point tel ou tel acte coupable a blessé l'ordre général et contrarié les plans du Législateur éternel. Songeons ensuite à cette épouvantable communication de crimes qui existe entre les hommes, complicité, conseil, exemple, approbation, mots terribles qu'il faudrait méditer sans cesse. Quel homme sensé pourra songer sans frémir à l'action désordonnée qu'il a exercée sur ses semblables, et aux suites possibles de cette funeste influence? Rarement l'homme se rend coupable seul ; rarement un crime n'en produit pas un autre. Où sont les bornes de la responsabilité ? De là ce trait lumineux qui étincelle entre mille autres dans le livre des psaumes : '*Quel homme peut connaître toute l'étendue de ses prévarications? O Dieu! purifiez-moi de celles que j'ignore, et pardonnez-moi celles d'autrui.*'

"Après avoir ainsi médité sur nos crimes, il se présente à nous un autre examen encore plus triste, peut-être, c'est celui de nos vertus. Quelle effrayante recherche que celle qui aurait pour objet le petit nombre, la fausseté et l'inconstance de ces vertus ! il faudrait avant tout en sonder les bases : hélas! elles sont bien plutôt déterminées par le préjugé que par les considérations de l'ordre général fondé sur la volonté divine. Une action nous révolte bien moins parce qu'elle est mauvaise, que parce qu'elle est honteuse.

"Ce n'est pas le crime que nous craignons, c'est le déshonneur ; et pourvu que l'opinion écarte la honte, ou même y substitue la gloire, comme elle en est bien la maîtresse, nous commettons le crime hardiment, et l'homme ainsi disposé s'appelle sans façon *juste*, ou tout au moins *honnête homme :* et qui sait s'il ne remercie pas Dieu de *n'être pas comme un de ceux-là ? . . .* C'est un délire dont la moindre réflexion doit nous faire rougir. Ce fut sans doute avec une profonde sagesse que les Romains appelèrent du même nom la *force* et la *vertu.* Il n'y en effet point de vertu proprement dite sans victoire sur nous-mêmes, et tout ce qui ne nous coûte rien, ne nous vaut rien. Otons de nos misérables vertus ce que nous devons au tempérament, à l'honneur, à l'opinion, à l'orgueil, à l'impuissance et aux circonstances ; que nous restera-t-il ? Hélas! bien peu de chose, je ne crains pas de vous le confesser ; jamais je ne médite cet épouvantable sujet sans être tenté de me jeter à terre comme un coupable qui demande grâce ; sans accepter d'avance tous les maux qui pourraient tomber sur ma tête, comme une légère compensation de la dette immense que j'ai contractée envers l'éternelle justice. Cependant vous ne sauriez croire combien de gens, dans ma vie, m'ont dit que j'étais un *fort honnête homme.*"

[1] Michelet, *Histoire du XIX^e. siècle.* "*Jusqu'au* 18 *Brumaire,*" bk. v ch. 2.

barbarians in this age of tolerance would be found amongst the magistrates. It is, indeed, a disease amongst those who, from father to son, have been accustomed to judge, condemn, dispose of human life—it is a disease to feel the need for always exercising that terrible function. And I do not speak of the sanguinary pleasure which certain men could take in it, but rather of the pride of exercising so lofty an authority. After the power of God, which is *to create*, the highest power, no doubt, is that of *killing*. That is why it becomes necessary to those who legally possessed it once. This was the genius of the greatest writer of the Restoration, de Maistre, a judge at Chambéry, whose audacious little book, not at all defensive, blamed, on the contrary, Reason, and challenged it to defend itself. In order to write such a book, to exclude light so far, it was necessary not to be ignorant, but to have cultivated false science and absurdity, to have always lived in a pretended science of scholasticism and of seminaries. Thus in certain Alpine valleys which the sun does not reach at noon, there reigns not a feeble light, but, what is worse, a wrong light—some shadows, some fogs here, there, upon frozen spots ; on the most barren, sharp, brilliant points, which delude. The author has so well succeeded, that, *even at noon*, the sun does not reach his valley. Since Bossuet and Louis XIV. he ignores everything, and therefore despises everything, rejects everything together, and without argument. All that he knows of the world is *the fall*, and the beautiful Christian justice where the innocent pays for the guilty. 'Let us not grieve for the grand massacres of innocents which always took place on the earth.' It is the method by which the heavenly gardener, by lopping off some branches, renders the others fertile. There, the author enumerates the immense massacres which God has allowed ; it seems that he takes pleasure in them, and that (as in the ancient taurobolium) he revives in a bath of blood. . . . This work appeared in 1796 during the brilliant campaign of Italy. . . . The book of de Maistre, which seems to promise Bonaparte, was in reality the manifesto of the counter-revolution." [1]

Napoleon Bonaparte [2] claims a passage in our record with

[1] The *Considerations upon the French Revolution* appeared, as we have already stated, in 1796.

[2] 1769-1821.

as much right as a mere author of books; for the victories which he achieved over the enemies of his country, and over his country itself, were not won only upon the battle-field. His proclamations and despatches were the work of a man of great mental power, of a man whose words became actions, as his actions inspired enthusiasm. Some of his addresses to his soldiers deserve to be compared with not a few of those recorded by historians of the ancient Greek and Roman generals, and breathe the same spirit of rapine. Witness this one, to the ill-clad and ill-fed soldiers of the army of Italy, upon his assumption of the command :—

"Soldiers, you are badly fed and almost naked. The government owes you much, but it can do nothing for you. Your patience and your courage do you honour, but they procure you neither profit nor glory. I am about to lead you into the most fertile plains in the world; there you will find large towns and rich provinces; there you will find honour, glory, and wealth. Soldiers of Italy, could you fail of courage?"

This allocution is not commonplace; I do not say that it was very lofty or very heroic; but it was undoubtedly of a nature to rouse the enthusiasm and the cupidity of the ragged horde. Another proclamation to the same army, after its early successes, dated from Milan, May 20, 1796, is more highly coloured :—

"Soldiers, you have poured like a torrent from the heights of the Apennines; you have routed and dispersed all that opposed your progress. Piedmont, delivered from Austrian tyranny, has given itself up to its natural feelings of peace and friendship towards France. Milan is yours, and the tricolor floats over the whole of Lombardy. The dukes of Parma and Modena owe their political existence solely to your generosity. The army which haughtily threatened you finds no barrier to assure it against your courage; the Po, the Ticino, the Adda, have not been able to check you for a single day; these boasted

bulwarks of Italy have been found wanting; you have crossed them as rapidly as you crossed the Apennine. So many successes have brought joy to the heart of the country; your representatives have ordered a festival to be held, dedicated to your victories, which is celebrated in all the communes of the republic. There your fathers, your mothers, your wives, your sisters, your sweethearts, rejoice at your triumphs, and proudly boast that they are related to you. Yes, soldiers, you have done much. But is there nothing left for you to do? Shall they say of us that we have known how to conquer, but that we have not known how to profit by victory? Shall posterity reproach you with having found Capua in Lombardy? Nay, I see you already rushing to arms. A cowardly repose fatigues you; days lost for glory are also lost to happiness. Well, let us advance! We have still forced marches to make, enemies to subdue, laurels to gather, insults to avenge. Let those who have sharpened the daggers of civil war in France, who have basely assassinated our ministers, who have burned our vessels at Toulon, tremble. The hour of vengeance has struck! But let the nations not be uneasy; we are friends of all nations, and more particularly of the descendants of Brutus, Scipio, and the great men whom we have taken as our models. To rebuild the Capitol, to place there in honour the statues of the heroes who have become famous; to arouse the Roman people, oppressed by ages of servitude, such shall be the fruit of our victories. They shall create an epoch in posterity; you shall have the deathless glory of changing the face of the most beautiful country in Europe. The French people, free and respected, shall give to Europe glorious peace, which shall repay it for the sacrifices of every kind which it has made during the last six years. Then you shall return to your homes, and your fellow-citizens shall point to you and say: 'He was one of the army of Italy!'"[1]

[1] "Soldats! vous vous êtes précipités comme un torrent du haut de l'Apennin; vous avez culbuté, dispersé, éparpillé tout ce qui s'opposait à votre marche. Le Piémont délivré de la tyrannie autrichienne, s'est livré à ses sentiments naturels de paix et d'amitié pour la France. Milan est à vous et le pavillon tricolore flotte dans toute la Lombardie. Les ducs de Parme et de Modène ne doivent leur existence politique qu'à votre générosité. L'armée qui vous menaçait avec tant d'orgueil ne trouve plus de barrière qui la rassure

In this proclamation the general is nothing; the dread name of France is hardly anything; the soldiers are everything. It is nearly all "you" from beginning to end; the "we" is more modestly heard. Bonaparte created courage, even if it had not existed before, for he made the meanest and weakest in his army believe himself a redoubtable hero. Every step of his career was marked by proclamations and addresses as vigorous and as stirring as these. It may be that none of them was more sublime than that of Henri de la Rochejaquelein [1] to his peasant-soldiers in the Vendée: "If I advance, follow me; if I die, avenge me; if I shrink, slay me!" But it cannot be doubted that the earlier proclamations of Bona-

contre votre courage. Le Pô, le Tessin, l'Adda n'ont pu vous arrêter un seul jour; ces boulevards vantés de l'Italie ont été insuffisants: vous les avez franchis aussi rapidement que l'Apennin. Tant de succès ont porté la joie dans le sein de la patrie; vos représentants ont ordonné une fête dédiée à vos victoires, célébrée dans toutes les communes de la république. Là, vos pères, vos mères, vos épouses, vos sœurs, vos amantes se réjouissent de vos succès et se vantent avec orgueil de vous appartenir. Oui, soldats, vous avez beaucoup fait; mais ne vous reste-t-il donc plus rien à faire? Dira-t-on de nous que nous avons su vaincre, mais que nous n'avons pas su profiter de la victoire? La postérité nous reprochera-t-elle d'avoir trouvé Capoue dans la Lombardie? Mais je vous vois déjà courir aux armes; un lâche repos vous fatigue; les journées perdues pour la gloire le sont pour le bonheur. Eh bien, partons! Nous avons encore des marches forcées à faire, des ennemis à soumettre, des lauriers à cueillir, des injures à venger. Que ceux qui ont aiguisé les poignards de la guerre civile en France, qui ont lâchement assassiné nos ministres, incendié nos vaisseaux à Toulon, tremblent; l'heure de la vengeance a sonné. Mais que les peuples soient sans inquiétude; nous sommes amis de tous les peuples, et plus particulièrement des descendants des Brutus, des Scipions et des grands hommes que nous avons pris pour modèles. Rétablir le Capitole, y placer avec honneur les statues des héros qui se rendirent célèbres, réveiller le peuple romain, engourdi par plusieurs siècles d'esclavage, tel sera le fruit de vos victoires. Elles feront époque dans la postérité. Vous aurez la gloire immortelle de changer la face de la plus belle partie de l'Europe. Le peuple français, libre, respecté du monde entier, donnera à l'Europe une paix glorieuse qui l'indemnisera des sacrifices de toutes espèces qu'il a faits depuis six ans. Vous rentrerez alors dans vos foyers, et vos concitoyens diront en vous montrant: Il était de l'armée d'Italie.—*Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 461.

[1] 1772-1794.

parte breathe the spirit of the Revolution in its warlike aspect, triumphant over its enemies, intoxicated with glory, transformed by success and ambition into the spirit of the Empire. They are the same in the streets of Paris as on the plains of Italy or the shores of the English Channel; as ardent and as full of the bathos of the "*commediante*" and "*tragediante*" when sealing the doom of the Directory as they had been whilst their utterer was the ready instrument of the Five.

In his youth Napoleon wrote some *Regulations* for a society of officers of the regiment of la Fère, called *la Calotte* (1788), only remarkable for their extreme democratic tendency; a *Letter to M. Matteo Buttafuoco, Deputy of Corsica at the National Assembly* (1790), in which the deputy is violently attacked on account of his aristocratical tendencies; a *History of Corsica*, in two small volumes, which was rigidly suppressed by the police during the first Empire; and was of no literary value, though it has been stated that Mirabeau said "that it seemed to give promise of a historian of the first rank;"[1] a reply to a subject proposed by the Academy of Lyons in 1789: "*To determine the Truths and the Sentiments which it is the most needful to inculcate in Mankind for its happiness*," and which did not receive the prize; the *Supper at Beaucaire* (1793), a conversation that takes place between two merchants from Marseilles, a native of Nîmes, a manufacturer of Montpellier, and a military man, and in which the latter, who is probably Bonaparte himself, tries to prove the folly of the South in rebelling against the Convention. This pamphlet is written from a sound political standpoint; the Government and the Committees being defended by arguments which have nothing in common with the declamatory and philosophical phrases then in fashion. Bona-

[1] *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte, Prince de Canino, écrits par lui-même.* 1836.

parte wrote also several not very interesting pamphlets, which go far to prove that he would most probably not have made the same reputation as a literary man which he made as a general. What share Napoleon had in writing in St. Helena the *Memoirs to serve for the History of France under the Reign of Napoleon* cannot be known with certainty. They are said to have been dictated by him to the generals Gourgaud and Montholon, who shared his captivity.

BOOK VIII.

THE EMPIRE AND THE RESTORATION.

CHAPTER I.

§ 1. The Poets.

When the Convention formally decreed that there should be a God, and that the soul should be immortal, two poets celebrated the occasion — Marie-Joseph Chénier and Jacques Delille.[1] It was no mere perfunctory duty with either of them. The unstable masses had eagerly adopted the worship of Reason, and the bulk of them had no less eagerly displayed their disgust with this short-lived atheism, by returning to the God of their fathers. But there was no necessity for recantation with men like Chénier and Delille. The latter, who, though a consistent royalist, had not quitted France, being content to wait in obscurity for the reaction which he knew must come sooner or later; robbed for a while of his position, of his growing fame, of the social life in which he had taken so much delight, pitied his exiled friends, and employed himself in writing, with no dainty circumlocutions, verses which were not to see the light of day until the storm had passed over his head. Amongst these verses was the dithyramb *On the Immortality of the Soul*, which was couched in less measured terms than the ode of Chénier, and which,

[1] 1738-1813.

of course, was not given to the public. The reader will be able to judge of the boldness of the poet by the following strophes :—

"Tyrants I hate! And, e'en in childhood's hour,
How oft my curses have their car pursued:
My haughty impotence despised their power;
I had sung Cato's praise, though Cæsar's might I viewed."[1]

No less eloquent are the two following stanzas :—

"Yes. You who have Olympus' thunders hurled,
And Law's eternal altars dare destroy,
Ye dastardly oppressors of the world,
Tremble! your doom is immortality.

"And you, whom sorrow for a while o'erwhelms,
Whom a God watches with paternal eye,
Pilgrims now toiling on through foreign realms,
Rejoice! your prize is immortality."[2]

The abbé Delille was happy enough to live into the age which restored to France the institutions which he cherished, and to take part in the literary activity of the Empire, by his didactic poem on *l'Homme des Champs (the Rustic)*, published in 1800, and the one on *Pity*, which appeared three years later. The latter is little more than a string of moral maxims

[1] "Que je hais les tyrants! combien dès l'enfance
Mes imprécations ont poursuivi leur char!
Ma faiblesse superbe insulte à leur puissance:
J'aurais chanté Caton à l'aspect de César."

[2] "Oui vous, qui de l'Olympe usurpant le tonnerre,
Des éternelles lois renversez les autels;
Lâches oppresseurs de la terre,
Tremblez, vous êtes immortels!

"Et vous, vous du malheur victimes passagères,
Sur qui veillent d'un Dieu les regards paternels,
Voyageurs d'un moment aux terres étrangères,
Consolez-vous, vous êtes immortels!"

in verse, rarely rising above mediocrity, and more grand in idea than in profundity and execution. He had, in the events of his unhappy country, abundant material for the exercise of his muse; but it can hardly be said that he attained to the dignity of grief with which a greater genius might easily have covered himself.

As early as 1769 Delille had translated the *Georgics* of Virgil into elegant verse; and in 1782 he wrote a monotonously pretty poem on *Gardens;* but it was not until the close of the century that he began to pour forth a continuous stream of translations and descriptive pieces which almost, without the intermission of a year, lasted until his death. Amongst the former we have the *Æneid, Paradise Lost,* and Pope's *Essay on Man;* amongst the latter, *Imagination,* the *Three Kingdoms of Nature,* and *Convention.* Here, no doubt, is the evidence of vast industry, a catholic taste, a uniform simplicity of theme. And, indeed, if Delille's merits as a poet are not of the highest order, they are at least such as commend him to lovers of a pure, quiet, and amiable style. His bitterest vein was all but exhausted in the poem on *Pity;* but its place was filled by a good-natured satire, of which the following description of *Coffee* may serve for example :—

"Coffee affords a good restoring draught,
Which clears the fumes of wine too freely quaffed
By her you gain, when you the table quit,
A calm more courteous and a brighter wit;
And soon recovered by her powerful aid,
You are not of a second feast afraid.
She by the god of Verse is praised and loved,
The poet's genius is by her improved,
And frigid rhymers, if at times inspired,
Write their best lines by coffee's perfume fired.
She can enliven philosophic plan,
And make an analyst a pleasant man
Statesmen, through her, well feasted and content,

Form happy schemes of better government. . . .
Knowledge sometimes to journalists she brings
Of court intrigues and deep designs of kings;
Peace, truces, wars, she to his dreams can show,
And lets him, for six sous, the world o'erthrow." [1]

The picture was not overdrawn seventy years ago, and it is not overdrawn to-day.

Louis, Marquis de Fontanes,[2] a poet-journalist, with even less pretension to originality than Delille, had the honour—if it be an honour—of being a sort of poet-laureate to Napoleon. Born at Niort, he came up to Paris at an early age, and joined the staff of the *Mercure* and the *Almanach des Muses.* He was proscribed during the Revolution, and afterwards during the Directory, went to England, and there made the acquaintance of de Chateaubriand. When the Empire was established, he became the intimate friend of a sister of Bonaparte, Madame Bacciochi, and was chosen president of the legislative body, a member of the Institute, and grand-master of the University. Consequently, much of what he wrote was perfunctory; and it is to his credit that his pane-

[1] "Le café vous présente une heureuse liqueur
Qui d'un vin trop fumeux chassera la vapeur;
Vous obtiendrez par elle, en désertant la table,
Un esprit plus ouvert, un sang-froid plus aimable;
Bientôt, mieux disposé par ses puissants effets;
Vous pourrez vous asseoir à de nouveaux banquets;
Elle est du Dieu des vers honorée et chérie.
On dit que du poëte elle sert le génie,
Que plus d'un froid rimeur, quelquefois réchauffé,
A dû de meilleurs vers au parfum du café.
Il peut du philosophe égayer les systèmes,
Rendre aimables, badins, les géomètres mêmes;
Par lui l'homme d'État, dispos après dîner,
Forme l'heureux projet de nous mieux gouverner. . . .
Au nouvelliste enfin il révèle parfois
Les intrigues des cours et les secrets des rois,
L'aide à rêver la paix, l'armistice, la guerre,
Et lui fait, pour six sous, bouleverser la terre."

[2] 1757-1821.

gyrics are not more fulsome than they are. He writes always gracefully and correctly, apparently without much effort, and certainly without any remarkable force or harmony. Amongst his best poems I may mention *The Carthusian Convent of Paris*, the *Sacred Books*, the *Day of the Dead*, and a specially pleasant allegory on the subject of Tasso, addressed to his intimate friend Chateaubriand. Of the other lesser lights of poetry who moved in the same orbit with Delille, let us be content to mention Esmenard,[1] the author of a descriptive poem on *Navigation;* Boisjolin,[2] a French Erasmus Darwin, who versified his thoughts on *Botany;* Castel,[3] who did the like thing for *Plants;* Gudin,[4] who followed the fashion with his *Astronomy;* Ricard,[5] with his *Globe;* and Aimé-Martin,[6] with his versified *Letters to Sophia on Physics, Chemistry, and Natural History.*

§ 2. The Dramatists of the Empire.

The drama of the Empire and Restoration was continuous with that of the later revolutionary epoch ; and in spite of all that Marie-Joseph Chénier could do, the French stage at the beginning of the present century displays nothing so much as the exhaustion of the classical inspiration which had hitherto served dramatists in lieu of originality. System had too long been confounded with genius ; and at the time which we are now considering, whilst the system remained the genius was almost entirely absent. Alexandre Duval[7] sufficiently satirised himself and his contemporaries when he offered to construct the plan of a piece for a younger and more ambitious poet.[8] For him nothing could have been

[1] 1769-1811. [2] 1761-1841. [3] 1758-1832. [4] 1738-1812.
[5] 1741-1803. [6] 1781-1847. [7] 1767-1842.
[8] Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 545.

more easy; it was but a kind of problem in mensuration, of which he knew the process and the solution by heart. Given the subject, the number of acts and scenes required, the construction of a classical play was a mere matter of arrangement, in which the most successful arranger would be the one that was most ingenious. Of course it remained for the author to trick out and decorate this framework with a few poetical expressions, a few studies of character, a few novel ideas, according to his own taste or the taste of the public. In this latter part of the work lay the need for genius; and for a poetic and dramatic genius of which the Empire knew little. Well might Ducis sigh: "Ah, my friend, what a hard thing it is to keep fine acts going upon remorse!" A certain M. Brifaut[1] has immortalised himself by a larger share than usual of the fatal facility of his age; for having written half a play with Spanish names and circumstances, and then changed his mind, he straightway located his scene in ancient Assyria, and took for his title *Ninus II.*

Of course the dramatists were not all Brifauts. Raynouard,[2] worked more conscientiously in his *Templars*, which was at least faithful to history, and sketched with as much care and appreciation of local and temporal colour as its author was capable of. It deserves to be compared with some of Chénier's best, and it dispensed with the too evident desire to make political converts, which, as I have said, was Chénier's great failing. But it lacks the natural play of human cause and effect; it is rather a descriptive poem than a tragedy of action.[3] "Moral Conversations on the subject of the

[1] 1781-1857. [2] 1761-1806.

[3] Madame de Staël well expressed the weakness of dramatic authorship at this epoch. "We shall finish," she said, "by seeing on the stage nothing but heroic marionnettes, sacrificing love to duty, preferring death to slavery, inspired by antithesis in their actions as in their words, but without any relation to that marvellous creature called man, with that terrible destiny which alternately carries him along and pursues him."

Templars" would have been a good title for it, though it might not have drawn so well on a play-bill. "Moral Conversations on the subject of Sylla" would have described *Sylla*, a play of de Jouy,[1] which yet had a fair success upon the stage, though only the last act can boast of any of the stir which we have come to think necessary to a drama.

Jean-François Ducis,[2] a man of great independence of character, referred to above as an indefatigable adapter of Shakspeare, the first Frenchman who made a systematic attempt to naturalise the English dramatist in France, had much of the true perception of a dramatic author, and was sincerely anxious to break through the slavish trammels willingly adapted by the devotion of his contemporaries to the used-up models of the classic stage. From 1769 to the close of the century he was engaged in his self-appointed task. *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, followed one another at intervals, until the "Bridaine[3] of tragedy," as Thomas called him, perceived that he had done as much in this line as his countrymen were willing or able to appreciate. The actors began to decline the parts assigned to them; and he tells one of his correspondents that everybody reproached him with the *genre terrible* which he had adopted. "Monsieur Ducis," somebody said to him, "withhold for a time these alarming pictures; you can resume them when you please; but give us a tender play, in the spirit of *Inès* or *Zaïre*." For another of his imitations he had recourse to Sophocles, adapting the *Œdipus* with some success, considering that it had been familiar in France for more than a century. It is easy to understand the position assumed by Ducis in his so-called Shakspearean plays; and it is impossible not to acknowledge the value of his work;

[1] 1764-1846. [2] 1733-1816.

[3] Jacques Bridaine (1701-1767) was a celebrated preacher, who delighted, above all, in depicting the terrible punishments awaiting the sinner.

the more so because, if he had been ambitious of a purely original fame, he could have done far better than most of his fellow-dramatists. Nay, he did better as it was. He wrote *Abufar, or the Arab Family,* and *Fœdor and Wladimir, or the Siberian Family,* which prove that he had real dramatic force, and much freshness of imagination. It would seem, however, that he distrusted his powers; for the last fifteen or sixteen years of his life were almost barren of literary results. In addition to his plays, I must not omit to mention a volume of fugitive poems, many of which possess uncommon beauty and purity. Here is the beginning of the ode *To my Household Gods :—*

"Ye little gods with whom I dwell,
Companions of my poverty,
Who contemplate with friendly eye
My easy chair and hermit cell,
My bed the hue of Carmelite,
My wardrobe made of walnut bright.
O my Penates, household gods!
Whose cherished presence safety bodes,
If I have never, for your sakes,
Grudged ample feast of dainty cakes,
For you have poured libations meet
Of wine, milk, honey, pure and sweet;
Then guard our door with faithful care,
Watch every hinge and bolt and bar,
Not lest some burglar in should break;
For what on earth is there to take?
No treasures lodge in my abode:
I need no escort on the road:
And only one short prayer I make,
That competence may with us stay,
And virtue never scape away." [1]

"Petits dieux avec qui j'habite,
Compagnons de ma pauvreté,
Vous dont l'œil voit avec bonté
Mon fauteuil, mes chenets d'ermite,
Mon lit couleur de carmélite,
Et mon armoire de noyer,
O mes Pénates, mes dieux lares,
Chers protecteurs de mon foyer,

The havoc played by the classical fashion was naturally less painfully evident in comedy than in tragedy; but yet the French stage has nothing great to show us during this period, even in respect of comedy. It is not much to say that the comic dramas of the Empire and Restoration are better of their kind than the tragedies; but at least so much can be said with truth. Picard[1] was one of the best and most fertile producers. A hard-working author, rarely content with less than a dozen hours at his desk in the course of a day, a tolerably shrewd observer of humanity between whiles, who was conscientious enough to write the biographies of his characters before he dressed them for the stage, he succeeded in giving many faithful pictures of human follies, accidents, and weaknesses. He was a satirist with a purpose, moreover, having a moral for every act, and a maxim to point every moral. He laboured to do for manners what Chénier laboured to do for politics, and to a certain extent he undoubtedly succeeded. Collin d'Harleville,[2] who died whilst Picard was comparatively young, wrote less than the latter, and in a less dramatic form. He too was bitten by the usual necessity of making his characters help him out with interminable soliloquies, and dialogues which rather recited the author's general idea of human nature than betrayed, as do the dialogues of a couple of excited human beings, the feelings and passions of their own hearts. Nevertheless he had force and ardour, and it was enthusiasm for his art, not the accidental bent of a professional man of letters, which first induced him to write plays. He had been brought up as a lawyer, and followed

Si mes mains, pour vous festoyer,
De gâteaux ne sont point avares,
Si j'ai souvent versé pour vous
Le vin, le miel, au lait si doux,
Oh, veillez bien sur notre porte,
Sur nos gonds et sur nos verrous,
Non point par la peur des filous ;
Car que voulez-vous qu'on m'emporte?
Je n'ai ni trésors ni bijoux,
Je peux voyager sans escorte.
Mes vœux sont courts ; les voici tous
Qu'un peu d'aisance entre chez nous,
Que jamais la vertu n'en sorte."

[1] 1769-1828.

[2] 1755-1806.

his profession until he felt and gave effect to his satirical vein. His best comedies are the *Optimist,* the *Old Bachelor,* and *Castles in the Air* (*Les Châteaux en Espagne*). Take the beginning and end of one of his soliloquies from the last-named play, and we shall find that Collin d'Harleville, as well as Picard, was occasionally given to the tendency "to point a moral and adorn a tale":—

> "Each mortal builds his castles in the air,
> In country or in town, no matter where;
> Asleep, awake, they all the same are made!
> The weary labourer, leaning on his spade,
> Can deem himself the squire of the place;
> Age can in thought the frosts of time efface. . .
> The clerk a minister, the priest "my lord"
> Becomes—The bishop. . . . In a word,
> In dreams, no fate can with my own compare;
> Only believe you're happy, and you are."[1]

The stage of the Empire had many other dramatists to draw upon. Lemierre,[2] of the old school, wrote several tragedies, of which *Hypermnestra* and the *Widow of Malabar* are considered the best; and Florian,[3] better known by his *Fables,* was the author of *Jeannot and Colin,* the best of his comedies; both died before the Directory. Andrieux,[4] who long survived the Restoration, a journalist and a satirist as well as a dramatist, wrote *Anaximandra,* a lively burlesque which

[1] "Chacun fait des châteaux en Espagne;
On en fait à la ville, ainsi qu'à la campagne;
On en fait en dormant, on en fait éveillé.
Le pauvre paysan, sur sa bêche appuyé,
Peut se croire un moment seigneur de son village;
Le vieillard, oublier les glaces de son age. . . .
Un commis est ministre, un jeune abbé prélat;
Le prélat. . . . En deux mots,
Quand je songe, je suis le plus heureux des hommes;
Et dès que nous croyons être heureux, nous le sommes."
Les Châteaux en Espagne, act iii., sec. 7.

[2] 1723-1793. [3] 1755-1794. [4] 1759-1833.

met with considerable success, and the *Blunderers* (*Etourdis*), which is still occasionally acted. Etienne,[1] who wrote a favourite piece called the *Two Sons-in-Law*, and Nepomucène Lemercier,[2] a stickler for the classical fashions, exhaust the list of those whom it is worth our while to notice. Lemercier, a fertile writer, with whom we have already made acquaintance as the author of *Pinto* and *Plautus*, boasted that he was the creator of historical comedy, and added in this style *Christopher Columbus* (1809) and *Richelieu* (1828), the latter being his latest work. He wrote also a number of tragedies, classical and historical, of which *Agamemnon*, written when he was only twenty-six years old, is considered the best. In 1810, shortly after having been elected a member of the Academy, he published a somewhat remarkable poem, the *Atlantead, or the Newtonian Theogony*, in which Oxygen, Caloric, Gravitation, Phosphorus, appear as the divinities of a latter-day theocracy. Nine years later appeared another work, the *Panhypocrisiad, or the Infernal Comedy of the Sixteenth Century*, played, according to the author, before a pit of demons, men and women, in the infernal regions. The prologue consists of a scientific discussion between the Earth and Copernicus. Fiends, princes, princesses, prelates, authors, banditti, warriors, madmen and saints, abstract personifications, Michel-Angelo, Francis the First and Charles the Fifth, are among the personages who defile before the reader in sixteen dreary cantos. But the man was better than the author. Though intimate with Bonaparte he never flattered him, but made him hear what he was already long unaccustomed to hear, the truth. After Napoleon had become emperor (1804), Lemercier said to him: "You amuse yourselves in making anew the bed of the Bourbons; I tell you that you shall not sleep ten years in it." In 1811, the emperor, before entering upon his Russian cam-

[1] 1778-1845. [2] 1771-1840.

paign, went to a meeting of the Institute, and, seeing the poet, asked him why for a long time he had not written any new plays for the stage. "Because," said Lemercier quietly, "I am waiting!" As soon as the Empire was declared, he also sent back the order of the Legion of Honour, of which he was a member.

Almost the only lyric poet worthy of mention amongst the literary men of the first Empire was Ecouchard Lebrun;[1] and of course the bulk of the work of an author who was seventy years of age at the beginning of the present century virtually belongs to the earlier epoch. Nevertheless, Lebrun was a man who identified himself with the spirit of each age through which he passed, and his six hundred epigrams extend pretty evenly over the events of more than half a century. He had great energy of conception and execution, and though he wrote much he laboured over his poems with almost painful minuteness. The consequence is that his portraits stand out clearly from his pages, like medallions that exhibit all the protracted industry of the engraver. His six books of odes, four books of elegies, two books of epistles, and the epigrams aforesaid, contain nothing that is not in some sense striking; and if the phrases strike more than the ideas, at least they produce a sensation of genuine pleasure. The finish of his language, and his fondness for classical names, may be judged by the following extract, which in the translation loses part of the bloom and flavour of the original :—

"A treacherous ship lies on the seas,
Wherein the stern Eumenides
A dread conspiracy contrive.
I hear the victim's piteous shriek,
Whom blood-stained hands of murder seek
To cast into the deep alive.

[1] 1729-1807.

Your rage, ye greedy pirates stay!
Fierce men, your barbarous clutch delay!
It is Arion mercy craves,
Stop, to his magic harp give heed.
He sings, and to protect his need
A dolphin cleaves the liquid waves.

He sings; his harp's enraptured sound,
Of blades that glitter all around,
Charms off each meditated blow;
The monster, 'neath the bard divine,
Submiss doth his huge bulk incline,
Soon as he reached the waves below;

And, as a chariot speeds along
By coursers guided fleet and strong,
Bears him o'er ocean's boundless plain
From watery depths of cave and rock,
Arion sees the Nereids flock
In crowds, to listen to his strains.

O, wondrous power of song to soothe!
The stormy waves are still and smooth,
The skies regain their smiling hue,
Soft calm the furious North enchains,
And Nereus' watery palace gains,
A splendour of celestial blue.

Arion, banish doubt and fear,
Now the Corinthian coast you near,
By noble Periander owned.
Minerva loves these shores of old;
And there a sage your eyes behold,
Upon a monarch's seat enthroned." [1]

[1] "Quel est ce navire perfide
Où l'impitoyable Euménide
A soufflé d'horribles complots?
J'entends les cris d'une victime
Que la main sanglante du crime
Va précipiter dans les flots.

Arrêtez, pirates avares!
Durs nochers, que vos mains barbares
D'Arion respectent les jours!
Arrêtez! écoutez sa lyre:
Il chante! et du liquide empire
Un dauphin vole à son secours.

Il chante ! et sa lyre fidèle
Du glaive qui brille autour d'elle
Charme les coups impétueux,
Tandis que le monstre en silence
Sous le demi-dieu qui s'élance
Courbe son flanc respectueux.

Le voilà, tel qu'un char docile,
Qui l'emporte d'un cours agile
Sur la plaine immense des mers !
Et du fond des grottes humides,
Arion voit les Néréides
Courir en foule à ses concerts.

O merveilles de l'harmonie !
L'onde orageuse est aplanie,
Le ciel devient riant et pur,
Un doux calme enchaîne Borée,
Les palais flottants de Nérée
Brillent d'un immobile azur.

Jeune Arion, bannis la crainte ;
Aborde aux rives de Corinthe :
Périandre est digne de toi.
Minerve aime ce doux rivage ;
Et tes yeux y verront un sage
Assis sur le trône d'un roi."

CHAPTER II.

§ 1. Revival of the Poetical and Religious Sentiment.

Count de Maistre and La Harpe had many companions in the contest which they waged, from 1794 downwards, against the philosophical and political ideas of the Revolution ; and though the reaction was for a moment checked by the *coup d'état* of October 1795, it declared itself again with increased energy a few months later. In no form was this return to the old ideas more distinctly championed than in the journals founded towards the close of the last century. La Harpe, Fontanes, Michaud, Lacretelle, and others, writing in the *Gazette Française,* in the *Quotidienne,* in the *Memorial,* fought manfully against the powerful writers whose confidence in the new order of things had not been shaken by the excesses of the Terror—against Chénier, Garat, Roederer, Benjamin Constant, writing in the *Conservateur,* the *Clef du Cabinet,* the *Journal de Paris.* The struggle was a long and bitter one, and it is not yet fought out. But it was a struggle which would not be confined to the newspapers. The more solid and deliberate literature of the Consulate and the Empire bears witness to its existence in other quarters, and to its effects upon individual minds ; and no one so well displays the revival of the religious sentiment as the author of the *Genius of Christianity,* a work which had a remarkable effect on public opinion in France, from the moment of its first appearance in 1802.

François Auguste, Viscount de Chateaubriand,[1] was born

[1] 1768-1848. Some of his biographers call him François-René.

at Saint-Malo, of an ancient Breton stock. His childhood was spent in his father's solitary castle at Combourg, where he received an education rather wide than profound, and, scarcely of age, he was sent on a visit to America and Canada. He returned to France in time to find the king in prison, and the nobility hurrying from their native land. Following the example of so many of his order, he fled to England; and there, after a few years of retirement, he printed his first work, an *Essay on Revolutions, Historical, Political, and Moral.* When Napoleon had subordinated all political and social interests to the single idea of foreign conquest, Chateaubriand re-entered France. In 1801 he published his romance of *Atala;* the following year saw the *Genius of Christianity,* and *René* appeared in 1805.[1] A voyage to the Holy Land followed, and from there he brought back a book on the *Martyrs* and an *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem,* both published in 1809. From romance, religion, and travel, our versatile author turned his attentions to politics, history, and mysticism. After some years spent in the political arena, from the date of the Restoration to the Revolution of 1830—a period during which he published hardly anything but political pamphlets, of which the one on *Bonaparte and the Bourbons* (1814) is the most virulent—Chateaubriand issued, in 1831, a volume of *Historical Studies.* This was succeeded in 1836 by an *Essay on English Literature;* in 1837 by a literal translation in prose of *Paradise Lost,* and in 1844 by the *Life of Rancé.* His *Memoirs from beyond the Tomb* appeared only after his death. In verse, Chateaubriand has left a tragedy, *Moses,* and a few minor poems.

Champion of Christianity as he was, Chateaubriand was by no means a man of settled religious convictions, or even of consistent faith in the principles laid down in the work which

[1] See about *René,* bk. viii. ch. iii. § i. p. 262.

is most commonly associated with his name. That he was popular and influential in his day we cannot doubt ; and perhaps the opinion expressed of him by M. Guizot, in his essay on *Corneille and his Time*, will suffice to explain the cause. "Read over again," says that acute observer of men and things, "the *Essay on Revolution*, *René*, and the *Memoirs from beyond the Tomb*, those three monuments wherein M. de Chateaubriand, young, mature, and old, has painted himself with so much complacency ; is there one of his dispositions or moral weaknesses that cannot there be discovered ? Our hopes so measureless, our disgusts so ready, our trials so variable, our ardours, our perpetual failures and regenerations, our alternative ambitions and susceptibilities, our returns to faith from relapses into doubt, that activity at once inexhaustible and uncertain, that mixture of noble passions and of selfishness, that fluctuation between the past and the future, all those changeable and ill-assorted features which have characterised amongst us, for half a century, the condition of society and of the human soul, M. de Chateaubriand also carried with him ; and his works, like his life, everywhere display their influence and their image." If this be true, it follows that the *Genius of Christianity*, like any other of its author's controversial works, must be regarded rather in relation to a phase of human thought than as the expression of an individual mind ; for the man, such as M. Guizot describes him, is, at any given moment, but a medium between the past and the future of his generation ; capable both of receiving and of giving impressions, but under the necessity of receiving before he gives. For the rest, Chateaubriand's style is vigorous, bright, crowded with images. His pictures tell, though a critic might say that the colouring is overdone ; he has weight, but it is rather by grouping and detail than by originality of conception. Another French critic,[1] hostile

[1] Michelet, *Histoire du XIXe siècle*, "*Jusqu'à Waterloo*," bk. i., ch. 9.

to Chateaubriand, says of *Atala, René,* and the *Genius of Christianity,* "Chateaubriand, a skilful swimmer, knew always to go with the rising sea, and to be carried by the mounting tide and waves (sometimes by the church, sometimes by royalism and the Restoration). . . . He understood that, in Paris, it is necessary, before all, to produce an effect by surprising people . . . and, the better to attract the notice of the passers-by, he threw himself out of the window. . . . I mean he wrote *Atala,* a little novel, in which the author, who at first had thought of the charming book *Paul and Virginia,* in order to draw the attention, created a language for himself, neither French nor Lower-Breton. This produced some effect, and every one, laughing, listened, and said, 'That is new!' Or, 'What does it all mean?' The prodigious ridiculousness of this production would have stifled any other author. But in it we find a *conversion;* the young savage in love dies a Christian. This made the book survive amongst a certain public, apparently very patient. . . . The *Beauties of Religion,* a profane title, which a true believer would never have employed, and to which was added, which is scarcely better, *Genius of Christianity,* sold so well that it was found profitable to swell it out more and more. To the sacraments, ceremonies, festivals, bells, were added the church, the monks, the missionaries, the mendicant-orders, the Jesuits, etc. This encyclopædia of a dead thing, decked out with recollections, but henceforth barren, was not without attractions for many men, in whom it was connected with the impressions of childhood. But it had not a great influence. . . . It had a literary success, and that was all. . . . Weariness is so much master during that time, that Chateaubriand, who just now took upon himself to console us by the charms of old recollections, acknowledges himself that his religion, evoked in the *Genius of Christianity,* has neither calmed nor consoled him. Hence *René,* that confession of desperate melancholy,—although an unnatural passion, of which a glimpse is caught,

assists and mixes with piety a slight taste of incest—a singular episode which one is astonished to find in the midst of this Christian encyclopædia."

Chateaubriand, by birth and breeding a man of the *ancien régime*, by riper training and conviction an adherent of the new philosophy, even to the extent of the virtual repudiation of Christianity which marked the intellectual movement under Voltaire and Rousseau, was said to be reconverted to the profession of his earlier creed by the prayers of his mother upon her death-bed. The need of his country once felt, the idea of what he looked upon as a remedy once conceived, he threw himself with enthusiasm into his task. A hundred others might have done it. The work should have commended itself to every one of the thousands of priests who fled before the guillotine, and who might have atoned abroad for the desertion of their posts at home. But few could have raised the standard so well as Chateaubriand, or could have proclaimed the watchword of religion with so much *verve*, so much eloquence and persuasion, so much poetry and philosophy. It was not mere declamation, or the mere reassertion of dogma, that could have hit the mood of France at that particular crisis. The philosophy of the eighteenth century was not obliterated ; it was scarcely even discredited. Terrorism, blank atheism, the doctrine of blood, the conversion of the Deity into an article of a code—these things were disbelieved and disclaimed by the bulk of the nation ; and it was in the place of these that Chateaubriand's discursive and ornate apology for Christianity was received with general acclamation.

The *Genius of Christianity* has four divisions. In the first the author passes in review the leading dogmas of the Christian faith, such as had been accepted for eighteen centuries without controversy. The next two parts, which comprise the gist of the work as it presented itself to its first readers, and as it has been estimated by succeeding genera-

tions, deal with the relations between religion on the one hand, and poetry, art, literature, on the other. Herein Chateaubriand has full scope for his best talents, and exhausts upon his theme all the ardour of an imaginative mind, a lofty genius, and a cultivated literary taste; so that there is no comparison between the attractiveness of these two parts and that of the remainder. The last division deals with the ceremonies and institutions of the Christian Church—with the theory and practice of Christian worship. From this fourfold, or rather threefold division of his subject, Chateaubriand deduces three arguments or grounds of persuasion, whereby he seeks to attract his readers back again to the faith of their forefathers. The genius of Christianity, he says, which France had hastily made up her mind to despise and ignore, is manifested first in its doctrines and mysteries, which contain all that can convince the mind and satisfy the natural yearnings of the heart—which can be said of no other form of faith; secondly, in the enjoyments which it has afforded to the mind of man; and thirdly, in the services and benefits which it has rendered to humanity in every age.

The conclusion alone was striking; it was forcibly put; and its *primâ facie* truth was sufficient to carry it home to the hearts of those already disposed to accept it, with all the force of an intuition. To this general predisposition of the public mind we must attribute, more even than to the eloquence and persuasiveness of the author, the enthusiasm with which his work was received. De Fontanes, who had been on intimate terms with Chateaubriand in England, where the *Genius of Christianity* was written, prepared the way both for the return of his friend to France, and for the appearance of his ambitious work. He felt the pulse of the public through the papers with which he was connected, and gave extracts from the book in the *Mercure.* When it was finally issued from the press, the welcome given to it was

great and immediate. Chateaubriand tells us in his *Memoirs:* "I became fashionable. My head was turned. I knew nothing of the pleasures of celebrity; I was intoxicated by them." La Harpe, the Fontenelle of his generation, at once sought out the author, and proclaimed his merits aloud. "This is criticism," he said, "this is literature. Ah, *messieurs les philosophes*, you have got more than you can manage here!" Bonaparte himself, who had just signed his Concordate with the Pope, and had restored the churches to the clergy, naturally hailed so stout an ally in his attempt to rebuild the national religion.[1]

Nine years later the Minister of the Interior, M. de Montalivet, it is said at the suggestion of Napoleon, invited the Institute to consider the merits of Chateaubriand's work; and the response to this appeal reminds one of nothing so much as the infant Academy's criticism of the *Cid*. The Institute was still embued, in 1811, with the philosophical ideas of 1789. Saint-Jean d'Angely, Morellet, Lemercier, Lacretelle, Arnault, without openly attacking Chateaubriand, treated his book much as it might be treated in some noted caustic and sceptic review of to-day. It is true that a severe criticism could not speak altogether favourable of the *Genius of Christianity*, as regards either its matter or its form; and it may be that these critics in particular were somewhat carried away by their special predilections. Lemercier's opinion was perhaps the most uncompromising, for he speaks of the book as "a work devoid of common sense, a heterogeneous compound of translations from the principal Hebrew poems, illuminated with colours taken from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, which has owed its success to party spirit." That last sneer was scarcely deserved. There is more in Chateaubriand's work than Hebrew poems and Bernardin de Saint-

[1] It was rumoured that Napoleon's brother Lucien had had a hand in the revision of the latter portion of the work.

Pierre; and as to its success, we must remember that the "party spirit" to which this was due was the spirit of a party which for the time being comprised a great part of the bulk of French society. As for ourselves, we can consider the *Genius of Christianity* both from within and from without the Institute; and we shall doubtless admit that its value as a literary work is not to be compared with its value as having contributed to a certain necessary and wholesome reaction in the public mind. Let the reader judge for himself by the following extract:—

"It is time[1] that we should know at last the true value of such reproaches as *absurdity*, *coarseness*, and *narrowness*, which are made every day to Christianity; it is time to show that, far from dwarfing the thought, it wonderfully lends itself to the raptures of the soul, and can exalt the mind as divinely as the gods of Virgil and Homer. . . . We dare to believe that this way of looking at Christianity offers some evidences, little known; sublime through the antiquity of its recollections, which go as far as the cradle of the world, ineffable in its mysteries, adorable in its sacraments, interesting in its history, heavenly in its morality, rich and charming in its pomp, it claims all kinds of pictures. Do you wish to follow it in poetry? Tasso, Milton, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, will depict to you its miracles. In literature, eloquence, history, philosophy? What have Bossuet, Fénelon, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Bacon, Pascal, Euler, Newton, Leibnitz, not done, through its inspiration? In arts? what masterpieces! If you examine it in its worship, of how many things do its old Gothic churches, and its admirable prayers, and its superb ceremonies, not speak to you? Amongst its clergy? Behold all these men who have transmitted to you the language and the works of Rome and Greece, all these hermits from the desert, all these refuges for the unfortunate, all these missionaries in China, Canada, Paraguay, without forgetting the military Orders whence chivalry will spring! Manners of our ancestors, picture of ancient days, poetry, even novels, secret affairs of life, we have made everything serve our cause. We ask for laughter

[1] *Génie du Christianisme*, part 1, bk. i. ch. 1.

from the cradle, and for tears from the tomb: sometimes, with the Maronite monk, we dwell on the summits of Mount Carmel and Lebanon; sometimes, with a sister of charity, we watch at the bed of a patient: here an American couple call to us from the bottom of their deserts; there we hear the maiden lament in the solitudes of the cloister: Homer takes his place near Milton, Virgil beside Tasso: the ruins of Memphis and Athens contrast with the ruins of Christian monuments, the tombs of Ossian with our country cemeteries; at Saint-Denis we visit the ashes of our kings; and, when our subject compels us to speak of the dogma of the existence of God, we only look for our proofs in the marvels of nature; in short, we endeavour to move the heart of the sceptic in all ways; but we dare not flatter ourselves that we possess this miraculous rod of religion, which makes living waters to leap forth from the rock." [1]

The *Genius of Christianity* is, in reality, the book on which Chateaubriand's reputation chiefly rests; *The Martyrs,*

[1] "Il est temps qu'on sache enfin à quoi se reduisent ces reproches d'absurdité, de grossièreté, de petitesse qu'on fait tous les jours au christianisme; il est temps de montrer que, loin de rapetisser la pensée, il se prête marveilleusement aux élans de l'âme, et peut enchanter l'esprit aussi divinement que les dieux de Virgile et d'Homère: Nous osons croire que cette manière d'envisager le christianisme présente des rapports peu connus: sublime par l'antiquité de ses souvenirs qui remontent au berceau du monde, ineffable dans ses mystères, adorable dans ses sacrements, intéressant dans son histoire, céleste dans sa morale, riche et charmant dans ses pompes, il réclame toutes les sortes de tableaux. Voulez-vous le suivre dans la poésie? le Tasse, Milton, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire vous retracent ces miracles. Dans les belles-lettres, l'éloquence, l'histoire, la philosophie? que n'ont point fait, par son inspiration, Bossuet, Fénélon, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Bacon, Pascal, Euler, Newton, Leibnitz! Dans les arts? que de chefs-d'œuvre! Si vous l'examinez dans son culte, que de choses ne vous disent point et ses vieilles églises gothiques, et ses prières admirables, et ses superbes cérémonies! Parmi son clergé? voyez tous ces hommes qui vous ont transmis la langue et les ouvrages de Rome et de la Grèce, tous ces solitaires de la Thébaïde, tous ces lieux de refuge pour les infortués, tous ces missionnaires à la Chine, au Canada, au Paraguay, sans oublier les Ordres militaires, d'où va naître la chevalerie! Mœurs de nos aïeux, peinture des anciens jours, poésie, romans même, choses secrètes de la vie, nous avons tous fait servir à notre cause. Nous demandons des rires au berceau, et des pleurs à la tombe: tantôt avec le moine Maronite, nous habitons les sommets du Carmel et du Liban; tantôt avec la fille de la Charité, nous veillons au lit du malade: ici deux époux Americains nous appellent au fond de leurs déserts, la nous entendons gémir la vierge dans les solitudes du cloître: Homère vient se placer auprès de

a sketch of Christianity at the time of Constantine, is from a historical and poetical view a failure, but the glamour of style throws a certain kind of charm over the descriptions of imperial Rome, of the catacombs, and of the monks in the desert, and over the chaste love of Cymodocée and the prophetic madness of Velléda. The *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem* is correct but cold; his *Natchez* is incoherent, and its final catastrophe is revolting in its atrocity; his *Historical Studies, or Discourses on the Fall of the Roman Empire* are full of antitheses, and bear ample proofs of an imagination which often carries the author beyond the realms of the historian. In his *Essays on English Literature* and in his translation of *Paradise Lost* he appears not to have sufficiently understood the subjects about which he wrote, as it seems to me, without any regard to the genius of the French language.[1] In his *Memoirs*

Milton, Virgile à côté du Tasse : les ruines de Memphis et d'Athénes contrastent avec les ruines des monument chrétiens, les tombeaux d'Ossian avec nos cimetières de campagne ; à Saint-Denis nous visitons la cendre des rois ; et, quand nptre sujet nous force de parler du dogme de l'existence de Dieu, nous cherchons seulement nos preuves dans les merveilles de la nature ; enfin nous essayons de frapper au cœur de l'incrédule de toutes les manières ; mais nous n'osons nous flatter de posséder cette verge miraculeuse de la religion, qui fait jaillir du rocher les sources d'eau vive."

[1] Let one example suffice, taken from the Seventh Book of *Paradise Lost*—

" Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
Within the visible diurnal sphere;
Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn
Purples the east."—Verses 21-30.

" La moitié de mon sujet reste encore à chanter, mais dans les bornes plus étroites de la sphère diurne et visible. Arrêté sur la terre, non ravi au-dessus du pôle, je chanterai plus sûrement d'une voix mortelle ; elle n'est devenue ni enrouée ni muette, quoique je sois tombé dans de mauvais jours, dans de mauvais jours quoique je sois tombé, parmi des langues mauvaises, parmi les ténèbres et la solitude, et entouré de perils. Cependant je ne suis pas seul, lorsque la nuit tu visites mes sommeils, ou lorsque le matin empourpre l'orient."

from beyond the Tomb Chateaubriand shows no doubt a certain amount of talent and perspicacity of observation, but also a great deal of pride and egotism, which was all the more bitterly felt because it offended the pride and egotism of others. His political opinions may be summed up in his own words :[1] "I am a partisan of the Bourbons through honour, a royalist through reason and conviction, a republican by taste and by character."

§ 2. A Lady-Author under the Empire.

The Empire had its exiles as well as the Republic ; and if London knew Chateaubriand in 1796, it knew Madame de Staël in 1813. Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker,[2] daughter of the celebrated minister, was born and educated in Paris, and was what is known as a precocious child. Her first work was published in her twenty-second year, and its title, *Letters concerning Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, sufficiently indicates the nature of the influence under which her earliest social and literary ideas were formed. She had married, two years before, Eric-Magnus, baron of Staël Holstein. At the outbreak of the Revolution her political pamphlets upon the situation earned for her a high repute both in France and England. In 1796 she published a treatise on the *Influence of the Passions on the Welfare of Individuals and Nations*, and five years later one on *Literature considered in its Relations with Social Institutions*. The most celebrated of her works, *Delphine* and *Corinne*, novels, and *On Germany*, appeared between 1802 and 1814. A memoir of her father, *The Last Opinions on Finance and Politics of M. Necker*, and in which she was sus-

[1] In *De la Restauration et de la Monarchie élective*, published in 1831.
[2] 1766-1817.

pected of having assisted, gave great umbrage to the First Consul. She was ordered to leave France, concealed herself for some time in the country, but finally received notice to quit within twenty-four hours, and went to Germany. At the death of her father (1804) she returned to Switzerland, remained there one year, went then to Italy, and afterwards lived for some time, in retirement, about twelve miles from Paris. But the success of *Corinne,* which is said to have been criticised severely in the *Moniteur* by Napoleon himself, made her leave France anew, by order of the police. In 1809 she came back secretly to superintend the printing of her book *On Germany.* The entire edition was seized, and she herself commanded to leave the country, whilst the Viscount de Montmorency and Madame Récamier were also exiled for having given her shelter. The jealousy of foreign nations was at its height throughout the Empire; and the minister of police, Savary, wrote a long letter to Madame de Staël, in which the following expressions occur:—"It has appeared to me that the air of this country does not agree with you, and we are not reduced to seek for models in the people whom you admire. Your last work is not French." Her residence in Coppet, in Switzerland, became unbearable, on account of the continuous interference of the French police; and she went from there to Vienna, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and finally to London, to escape from the spies of Napoleon. Her *Ten Years of Exile* were published after her death.

The style of Madame de Staël is peculiarly attractive. Entirely apart from the fact that she is a woman, it is impossible not to be struck by the warmth of her imagination, her copiousness of phrase, her ease, readiness in description and suggestion, her large views on the moral or social questions which she touches. As a critic, especially of subjects and objects relating to the varied aspects of nature and art, she holds her own with the best of her contemporaries, and a

strong element of human interest runs through all that she has written. In her work upon *Germany*, which was only published in London in 1814, these faculties are perhaps better exemplified than in any other. She had been thrice across the Rhine, first in 1803, and again in 1807 and 1808. Readily impressible, an acute observer, and a spirited commentator on all that she observed, it was but natural that these voyages should have inspired her with thoughts worthy of a lasting expression. After the fall of the Empire the public could appreciate that which offended the Emperor and his ministers. Frenchmen knew little of the recent ideas and literary productions of their neighbours; they had barely seen the works of Goethe and Schiller, of Klopstock and Gessner; and Madame de Staël's remarks were received with zest. The Germans themselves were pleased and flattered by this recognition of their best points, and the authoress came to be commonly known amongst them as the *Gute Frau*. From that moment, if not from an earlier date, Madame de Staël maintained relations of friendship with the authors of *Faust* and *Wallenstein*, with Humboldt, Schlegel, Wieland, and many other eminent men across the Rhine.

"That which she feels," Fontanes said of Madame de Staël, "is always more true than that which she thinks." The criticism is severe, but for the most part just. She is at her best in all that touches the imagination; and as Germany, at that time, especially in its literary aspect, was nothing if not imaginative, it is no matter of surprise that this volume of personal criticism was her masterpiece. Her tendency towards the romantic was always conspicuous in her writings; and the manner in which she appreciated and discussed the romanticism of the Germans, indicated, as it tended to bring about, a sort of romantic revival in France. In the course of the work which we are now considering she has occasion to speak expressly of this tendency. "The term

romantic," she says, "has been recently introduced into Germany, in order to describe poetry whereof the songs of the troubadours were the origin: that which was born of chivalry and Christianity. If we do not admit that paganism and Christianity, the North and the South, antiquity and the middle ages, chivalry and the Greek and Roman institutions, have divided the empire of literature, we shall never be able to judge, from a philosophical point of view, the ancient and the modern taste."[1]

The general plan of the book is systematic; and so far as its literary views are concerned, it is rather philosophic than general. After the poets of the land in which she had sojourned, no men of letters attracted her more strongly than Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Herder, Jacobi. If she had not personally met all the German philosophers of the modern schools of thought, she had met men and women capable of discussing their theories and repeating their maxims. If she had not read all their severe and difficult works, she had read German criticisms, commentaries, journals, and correspondence, which had sufficiently instructed her to make her an able and interesting exponent of German ideas to French readers. It was almost a new intellectual world which Madame de Staël at this time opened up before her fellow-countrymen; and it was for them a pleasant initiation into a novel study, which served thereafter to make the labours of Cousin all the more easy and successful. *Delphine* is a novel in which a description of the happiness to be realised in marriage only, and the danger of an illegitimate union, are described, and in which Madame de Staël depicts herself; whilst *Corinne* is the portrait of a woman of genius and full of sensibility, and an idealised delineation of the author. These novels contain many pictures of men, women, and sites, which would perhaps have been all the more effective if they had been written in a less

[1] De l'Allemagne, *De la poésie classique et de la poésie romantique.*

theatrical style, a style peculiar to not a few of the *littérateurs* of the Empire.[1] But though Madame de Staël did not escape the influences of her time, her heart was not imperial. When it was proposed to her that she should celebrate the birth of the King of Rome, and thus receive permission to return to France, she replied: "All that I can do for him is, to wish that he may get a good nurse."

§ 3. Philosophy during the Empire.

Amongst the men of the philosophical reaction—the men who, during the first ten or twelve years of the present century revolted against the materialism of the revolutionary philosophy, and oppose with the legitimate weapons of metaphysical science the sensationalism of Condillac and his successors—was Royer-Collard.[2] Descended from an old Jansenist family, he was still young when the Revolution broke out, and he adopted the principles of constitutional progress with the enthusiasm of a well-balanced mind. He had come up to Paris in 1787, in order to pursue his career at the bar, and had studied with that end in view under the famous advocate Gerbier. He joined the Opposition party in the conscientious belief that a representative Chamber and a supreme National Assembly would remedy all the evils under which his country laboured; and from 1789 to 1792 he was a more or less active member of the Commune of Paris. In the latter year he retired before the triumphant violence of the tenth of August; and was consequently not implicated in the deposition and death of the king. On the 31st of May

[1] Michelet in his *Histoire du XIXe siècle*, "*Jusqu'à Waterloo*," bk. i., ch. 9, says: "Madame de Staël, . . . wrote the novel so diffuse of *Delphine*, then in *Corinne* the faint personage of Oswald, an indecision which turns to spleen."

[2] 1763-1845.

1793, he appeared, as a delegate from his section, before the Convention, in which the Girondins were at that moment supreme, in order to exhort them to take precautions against the threatened violence of the Jacobin party. From that moment he remained an impatient spectator of the violence by which the Republic was daily more and more discredited; and though, after the fall of Robespierre and the promulgation of the new constitution, he was elected as a member of the Five Hundred, he was subsequently expelled from that body as a Royalist. If Royer-Collard was a Royalist at this time, he was so only potentially, and in the most constitutional sense. His predilections were always in favour of moderation; his face was ever set against extremes, whether of lawless violence or of law-protected despotism. Certainly he had no sympathy with those who had deluged Paris in blood. "These men," he said once, referring to the chiefs of the Mountain, "whom we have since transformed into fantastic Titans ordained by Providence, were pure and simple *canaille*."

When Napoleon was organising the Faculty of Letters in Paris, he nominated Royer-Collard to the chair of the history of philosophy (1811). The latter had for some years kept up a correspondence with the legitimate heir to the crown (Louis XVIII.); but when he accepted the Empire—which he did without enthusiasm—he ceased to work for the Restoration. It would be easy to say that Royer-Collard was a trimmer; and he certainly seems to have lived with the same security under Assembly, Convention, Directory, Consulate, Empire, and Constitutional Monarchy. But under the Empire he ceased to be a politician, and gave himself up to philosophical studies. The bent of his mind was towards a rational spiritualism; his masters were Plato, Descartes, Bossuet, Pascal, and Reid. Reid especially pleased him; and it was the belief of Royer-Collard that the Scotch metaphysician had succeeded in controverting the sensationalist views of Locke and Hume,

which, through the interpretation of Condillac, had roused the Frenchman's antipathy. Although Royer-Collard's lectures did not extend beyond the end of the year 1813, which virtually brought the First Empire to a close, his two years and a half sufficed to enable him to give full expression to his ideas, which, sound or unsound, produced a deep impression upon his age. He translated Reid's work into French, and occupied the greater part of his first course in reading the most striking passages to his hearers—amongst whom were Cousin and Jouffroy—using them, as he went along, to controvert the positions of Condillac. "What experience," he asked in his first lesson, "will convince us that sensation is sufficient to fertilise all the domains of intelligence and sentiment? Because it preceded the exercise of our faculties, are these less original, and do they owe nothing to their own energy? Is it sensation which perceives, which recollects, which passes judgment, which reasons and imagines? Is it in sensation that the eternal law of rights and duties is laid down? It prescribes the useful, does it prescribe the beautiful and the honest? Did it inspire this verse, 'Summum crede nefas animum præferre pudori?'"[1]

These questions justify us in doubting whether Royer-Collard saw the real point at issue between Locke and Reid. Certainly the problem, as he states it here, is not the problem which naturally arises out of the principles enunciated by the founder of the sensational school. And, in fact, whatever may have been the influence of Royer-Collard upon his generation, his views do not manifest the metaphysical strength necessary to cope with the theories of a Locke.

The attitude taken by Royer-Collard naturally pleased the

[1] "Believe it the greatest crime to set disposition above modesty." For Royer-Collard's lectures see *Œuvres Complètes de Thomas Reid*, Paris, 1828 and 1838, published by Jouffroy, wherein will be found an appreciative view of the latter's philosophical position, and which, doubtless, ought to be read before coming to a conclusion on the merits of the master.

Emperor, who rejoiced to think of an Englishman being worsted by a Frenchman in any kind of conflict. One of the professor's lectures had been laid overnight on Napoleon's table by the librarian of the palace ; and the Emperor, having read it, sent for de Talleyrand, and said, "Do you know, *monsieur le grand électeur*, that there has arisen in my university a very weighty philosopher, who may possibly do us great honour, and rid us altogether of the ideologues, by crushing them with argument?" Royer-Collard was not quite so powerful as his patron wished to think him ; but he was, at all events, one of the founders of a philosophical movement which, under the Restoration, was to produce significant results.

Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise, count de Bonald,[1] son of an old officer of the army of Condé, and himself a soldier, was one of the royalist *émigrés* who remained most faithful to the traditions of his youth. When Louis XVI. signed the decree for the civil constitution of the clergy, Bonald resigned the position which he held as president of the local administration of his department, and fled with his children to Heidelberg. Here he set himself to write his political and religious *Theory of Power in the Civil Society*, a book whereof the leading ideas were afterwards embodied in one of greater pretension, *Primitive Legislation*, published in France in 1802. The former work had been seized and condemned by the Directory ; and it is related that when Bonald returned to the capital, he went, under an assumed name, to inquire of the police concerning the actual fate of the copies which had been sent from Constance to Paris. He was taken into a large room which he found strewn with victims of the government's indiscriminating vigilance. A short search enabled him to discover a copy of the *Theory of Power* lying side by side with an obscene book. "Pardieu!" he exclaimed involuntarily, "I am dying in rather bad company." The tolerant officer who accompanied

[1] 1754-1840.

him smiled, and said, "I can understand that the ordeal is too strong for a father, but I promise him to be discreet." The author was permitted to carry the book away with him; and presently afterwards, having sent it to the First Consul, who had sufficient sense to perceive its harmlessness, his old proscription was cancelled. Thenceforth he threw himself into the campaign which Fontanes, La Harpe, and Chateaubriand were waging against the ideas of the Revolution. He had neither the genius nor the power of his intimate friends Chateaubriand and de Maistre; but his *Primitive Legislation* marks a distinct development of the intellectual ideas of France during the earlier years of the century, and deserves to be mentioned on this account alone. The scope of the work is ambitious. "Modern philosophy," says de Bonald in his preface, "confounds in man his mind with his organs; in society, the sovereign with his subjects; in the universe, God Himself with nature; everywhere, cause with effect; and it destroys all order, general and particular, by taking away all real power of the man over himself, of the leaders of states over their subjects, of God over the universe." The generalisation is a bold one, but it leaves room for sufficiently striking developments. The philosophy of subordination was Bonald's central idea; and it is easy to see how thoroughly it was opposed to the conceptions which Voltaire and Rousseau, amongst others, had grafted upon the minds of their fellow-men in the eighteenth century, and which have not yet been cast aside. The fact is that Bonald was too bold, that his generalisation was a little too venturesome, and that his arguments, if carried to their logical conclusion, would destroy all liberty for man, for the state, and for religion.

Let me conclude the present chapter by a mere mention of the name of Joseph Joubert,[1] a native of Montignac, who, thanks to his friendship with Fontanes, all-powerful under the

[1] 1754-1824.

Empire, was brought up from his professorship at Toulouse to occupy the position of inspector of studies in Paris. He left behind him a volume of *Thoughts, Essays, and Maxims,* of which Sainte-Beuve says that no book better crowns the series commenced by the *Thoughts* of Pascal, and continued by La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Vauvenargues.

CHAPTER III

§ 1. Influences of Foreign Literature on that of France.

If, in philosophy and in literature generally, the period of the Consulate and the First Empire was, as we have seen reason to conclude, a period of comparative stagnation, the cause of this dearth in the intellectual progress of France is not far to seek. "At the moment when the Revolution broke out," says Jouffroy,[1] "the teaching of Condillac was still too fresh to have betrayed its weaknesses; the storm roused by that event suspended every kind of reflection, and interrupted, so to say, the succession of metaphysical ideas; and when calm was restored at home, such great things succeeded abroad, that it was difficult for the minds most disposed to reflection to detach themselves completely from the spectacle of the majestic struggles of the Empire against Europe. In presence of these mighty events, thought could not concentrate itself energetically; for, ever diverted, it worked with but the half of its forces. Thus the Empire was an epoch of philosophic slumber. Almost everywhere men were satisfied with the ideas of the eighteenth century; the thought of the nineteenth was in a sense adjourned. Moreover the war had suspended all learned communications with other parts of Europe, and foreign ideas could not intervene, as they have since done, to correct, to extend, and to animate our own."

[1] Introduction to the *Fragments of M. Royer-Collard's Lectures* in Jouffroy's *Complete Works of Reid*, quoted above.

We have seen what was the result of Madame de Staël's attempt to make her countrymen, under the Empire, better acquainted with the intellectual condition of Germany. The jealousy of Napoleon and his ministers was not satisfied even with the exile of those who ventured to appreciate the virtues of foreigners; it extended, as we have seen, even to the exile's friends. Nevertheless it was chiefly through the efforts of Madame de Staël, and in continuation of the interest exerted by her work, that France came under the influence of German ideas, at the very moment when the soil of France was partially occupied by German troops.

If it was through a Frenchwoman that the new Germany was made familiar to the new France, an Englishman was destined to be himself one of the first channels of a remarkable stream of English influence upon modern French literature. It is true that Ducis had familiarised his countrymen with Shakspeare, even before 1789; true also that the invectives of Burke had made themselves heard and felt in Paris during the Revolution; but the Paris of the Empire had little or no communication of thought with the England of her day. The *émigrés* had friends at home, and some of them, repudiating the Empire as they had detested the Republic, still corresponded with the capital. But nothing of this kind was open or general; the intercourse was that of individuals, and to the public at large the intellectual activity of England was under a ban. When the treaty of Vienna brought the long European war to a close, the cultivated minds of the two countries approached each other with an eagerness which their recent enmities on the battlefield did little to check. "There were in this almost inevitable tendency," as a French writer points out,[1] "certain grave inconveniences: the ideal of

[1] Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. i. p. 229. I am greatly indebted to this work for what I have said about the literary history of the Restoration.

France was thenceforth in England. The most active minds (of the former country) found themselves almost fatally driven to seek, in a more thorough imitation, in a more absolute conformity with the political ideas of England, a resource against the difficulties which they encountered. It was, therefore, in the circumstances rather than in the desire of men that the germ of a new revolution was discovered. Ideas, like plants, have their vegetation as well as their growth; the mark of 1688 was inscribed on the idea of the importation of a constitution after the English fashion. This favour accorded to English ideas served naturally to prepare the way for the influence of English literature." In point of fact, men like Villemain, Guizot, and Cousin, were already doing much to create and encourage this influence; and from the year 1814, the gradual reconciliation of the two countries tended to naturalise in France the most eminent of English men of letters.

The staple of the literary commerce was romance; nothing that either Germany or England could contribute served better to satisfy the sharpened appetite of their neighbours than the works of their poets and writers of fiction. Two Englishmen in particular, Scott and Byron, rose high in the favour of Frenchmen, as soon as their works had been translated and their lives had been made familiar in France. The historical novels of Sir Walter Scott took a strong hold on the imagination of his new readers. The majority of them were at once translated; the style was caught up and imitated. Moore's *Loves of the Angels*, and other English works of the same epoch, found many admirers among the children of the generation which had delighted in Rousseau and the younger Crébillon. But it was to Lord Byron more than to any other that the literary Anglomania of the Restoration was due; and it was his life as much as his works which produced so deep an impression in France. Something not

unlike the life of Byron had already been traced by a French hand. The *René* of Chateaubriand, drawn to a certain extent from his own personal characteristics, was in many respects a faithful type of the age ; full of aspirations and of disillusions, unstable and discontented ; avid of pleasure, yet always finding weariness in fruition ; melancholy, sardonic, and ever burning for notoriety. It was this and more which his contemporaries saw in the young and noble poet who seemed to belong rather to Europe than to England, and who himself had little of insularity in his character. *Childe Harold* was a revelation to Frenchmen ; and of the few who could thoroughly appreciate it, it is no exaggeration to say that they valued it more highly than the bulk of Byron's fellow-countrymen. *Lara, Manfred, The Giaour*, one by one exerted their sway over minds which had been long accustomed to extraordinary emotions, and whom the fall of Bonaparte had left a prey to comparative monotony and mediocrity. Moreover, the Englishman's pantheism was precisely the kind of religion which suited an epoch in which atheism had become discredited, and orthodoxy was an impossibility.

A new era of French literature may fairly be said to begin with the year 1815. The stage whereon the national drama was henceforth to be played had been rebuilt. The church was restored ; the pope and orthodoxy were once more on their pedestals. Legitimate monarchy was re-established ; though it were but by foreign bayonets, Louis XVIII. sat upon the throne. Philosophy was the scene of a struggle between the old ideas, strong and discredited, and the new ideas, weak but protected. The pride of nationality, late raised to an excess of ardour, more recently wounded to the quick, was still potent in its ill-regulated strength. Cosmopolitanism, after being for a period oppressed and almost destroyed, had received an access of energy which was destined to produce an effect altogether wholesome upon the

literature of modern France. Nor were the actors unworthy of such a stage and of such a crisis. Amongst the older men, de Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand, Frayssinous,[1] Royer-Collard, still bore an active part in the intellectual struggle of the nation. Amongst the men who had barely reached their prime, Guizot, Cousin, Odilon-Barrot, Lamennais, Lamartine, Béranger, and others, were giving ample proof of their descent from the giants of the eighteenth century. Thiers, Michelet, Victor Hugo, Mignet were born ; and it was under the Restoration that the earliest flights of their genius were to be attempted.

§ 2. The Periodical Press.

If we would comprehend the spirit of the literature of the Restoration, we shall do well to seek our illustrations first of all in the periodical press ; for it is here that the leading minds of the epoch are to be found in greatest approximation and in most striking contrast. "Speech and pen," it has been well said,[2] "governed France : every one stretched out his hand towards this intellectual sceptic. Not a single man of note could be mentioned who was not more or less a journalist. Chateaubriand, Bonald, Lamennais, Frayssinous, the cardinal de la Luzerne, the duke de Fitz-James, the duke de Lévis, M. de Villèle, M. de Corbière, M. de Castelbajac, M. de Kergorlay, M. de Frenilly, MM. de Conny, de la Rochefoucauld, O'Mahony, Agier, de Bouville, d'Herbouville, employed the press to defend or propagate their ideas, as MM. Royer-Collard, Guizot, the duke de Broglie, de Barante, Villemain, Cousin, Kératry, and the whole youthful school which, marching in their steps, was to reach the front in the suc-

[1] 1765-1841.

[2] Nettement, *ibid.*, vol. i. p. 357.

ceeding stage ; MM. Duchâtel, Vitet, de Rémusat, Duvergier de Hauranne, Jouffroy, Dubois, Cavé ; and, in a more decided shade of opinion, Casimir Périer, Laffitte, the general Foy ; Benjamin Constant, Laborde, the marquis de Chauvelin, MM. Comte, Dunoyer, Thiers, Mignet, Carrel. King Louis XVIII. himself did not disdain to develope his royal opinions in articles secretly sent to the newspapers."

It was now that the press acquired its proud title of "The Fourth Estate ;" and, both in France and in England it richly deserved the name. It is difficult to imagine the effect produced by the newspapers of the Restoration, and though the articles were anonymous, and therefore had a natural tendency to reduce even the highest efforts of some of the contributors to the same dead level, such and such an article in the *Minerve*, the *Journal des Debats*, the *Conservateur*, the *Globe*, was, day after day, the talk of Paris, and the powerful instrument of political and social development. It was a race of intellectual progress between journals and journalists. Satire and invective were the weapons which told most forcibly in the struggle for the pre-eminence of ideas ; and it was especially in the *National*, a liberal journal started towards the end of the Restoration, that these weapons attained their greatest power. The *Conservateur* was the special organ of the Catholic monarchical school ; the school of the established monarchy as deriving its right and sanction from the Charter of 1814. Chateaubriand was its principal founder, and in a letter on the occasion of its foundation he says : "Neither I nor my friends will take any interest in a work which is not thoroughly constitutional. We desire the Charter : we believe that the force of the royalists is in the free adoption of representative monarchy."[1] With Chateaubriand were associated the cardinal de la Luzerne, Lamennais,

[1] J. de Maistre wrote to de Bonald : "Do you believe in the Charter ? For my part, I believe in it as much as in the fish remora."

de Bonald ; and their ranks were subsequently reinforced by Lamartine, Villèle, Lévis and Fitz-James, and M. Berryer the younger. The success of the paper was great ; and yet, perhaps not so great as that of the *Globe*, a liberal paper, which had been established in 1824, by MM. Pierre Leroux, de la Chevardière, Dubois, and others. This paper had at once a considerable influence ; and it could hardly have been otherwise in such an age and with such conductors. Amongst the earliest contributors, in addition to those already named, were Patin and Damiron, of the eclectic school ; Farry, afterwards killed in an attack on the Tuileries, in 1830 ; Ampère, Sainte-Beuve, Vitet, de Rémusat, Duvergier de Hauranne. M. Thiers wrote a series of eight articles on the *Salon* of 1824 ; but the tone of the *Globe*, both in philosophy and in general criticism, was somewhat too far in advance for the historian of the Revolution, who clung to the earlier philosophical views of the eighteenth century. A few years later the *Revue Française* was founded by Guizot, Cousin, Villemain, Barante, and de Broglie, who had also the partial assistance of de Rémusat. The *Revue* was on the same side as the *Globe*, but was less outspoken than its younger and more intrepid contemporary. Of the spirit and qualities of the latter Guizot himself has said, in his *Memoirs in aid of the History of my Time:*[1] "Two faults were associated with these generous tendencies : the ideas developed in the *Globe* lacked a fixed basis and a firm limitation ; their form was more decided than their substructure ; they revealed spirits animated by a grand movement, but which did not advance to a single and certain goal, and accessible to an indifference which gave ground to fear lest they might one day themselves drift upon the rocks to which they drew attention. At the same time the spirit of clique, that disposition to study one's own pleasure in the little circle wherein one lives, and to isolate

[1] Vol. i. p. 324.

oneself in indifference from the great public, for whom one works and to whom one speaks, exercised too much sway over the *Globe*." It was possibly some such suspicion as this, added to the temptation to wield the same power in general politics which had for six years been wielded over literature, which caused the conductors of the *Globe* to open its columns in 1830 to the politics of the day. From that moment the influence of the paper steadily declined; not, however, before it had done its work.

The newspapers were greatly assisted by pamphlets, and one of the most powerful, and perhaps the ablest, of the pamphleteers of that time was Paul-Louis Courier.[1] A native of Paris, a man of cultivated and scholarly tastes, he became an officer of artillery under Bonaparte, but he withdrew from the army in order to devote himself to literary pursuits, and secured the reputation of a learned classical student. During a sojourn at Rome he had the good fortune to discover an unedited fragment of Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, but by accident Courier spilled some ink on one of its pages; and he was accused of having done so on purpose. He published a translation of this classical pastoral poem at Florence, and only printed a small number, part of which he sent to the most eminent scholars in Europe. The rest of the edition was seized by order of the Minister of the Interior; and Courier was accused of having left the army without leave. He writes himself:[2] "I have two ministers after me, of whom one wishes to have me shot as a deserter; whilst another wishes to have me hanged for having stolen some Greek. . . . One of them says: 'You are a soldier, for you got drunk in the island of Lobau last year with L. and some scamps like him, who called you comrade; you followed the Emperor on horseback; so you shall be shot.' The other says: 'You shall be hanged, for you have soiled a page of

[1] 1772-1825. [2] September 12, 1810.

Greek, to play a trick on some pedants who do not know Greek, nor any other tongue.' Thereupon I bewail my misfortunes and reply : 'Shall I then be shot for having drunk a draught of wine to the health of the emperor? Must I also be hanged for a blot of ink?'" Courier remained in Italy for some years, and on his return produced a translation of Xenophon's treatise on *Cavalry;* and subsequently a version of part of the third book of Herodotus, in French of the sixteenth century. Courier had a taste for the archaic forms of the language, and even his ordinary style bears witness to the manner in which he had steeped his mind in the spirit of the old writers. Under the Restoration he was a pamphleteer of no little force and energy, assisting outside the generous efforts of General Foy and his friends within the Chamber.[1] His familiar correspondence offers a model of wit, grace, and abounding facility of expression; but it is as a pamphleteer that he will always continue to be best known.

Courier was one of those men who are instinctively inclined to be rebels against authority based upon simple privilege, or upon merely accidental or arbitrary power. He had a natural tendency towards an attitude of opposition; and very much the same feeling which caused him to quit the army of the Emperor made him take up a position adverse to Louis XVIII. and his ministers. Personal pique, it may be even the desire of notoriety, contributed to make him the Diogenes of his day, a cynic whom few things could please, and who saw national crimes and oppressions everywhere. In 1819, having failed in his candidature for the seat vacated by Clavier, his father-in-law, in the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, he addressed a caustic brochure to the members; and from that moment he seems to have definitely

[1] It was General Foy (1775-1825), a liberal orator of considerable pretensions, who exclaimed in the heat of debate: "We are but five in the Chamber, but we have all France behind us."

chosen his path. He retired to a cottage on the border of a forest, near Luynes, in Touraine; lived the life of a stoic, if not that of an absolute hermit; and without ever letting the world forget that he had been an officer in the army, and was a man of rank and cultivation, signed all his pamphlets, "Paul-Louis Courier, vine-dresser." From April 1819 to July 1820, he wrote a number of letters to the newspaper *The Censor*, which exhibit for the first time his ripest, quaintest, and most vigorous style; and though his declamations, his invectives, his apostrophes, his moral sayings, are occasionally of the forcible-feeble kind, displaying too much mechanical power for the effect produced, still there are many passages at once lofty and necessary to be spoken; reminiscences of 1789 which were not wholly out of place in 1819. Take, for instance, his familiar similitude of the nation and its rulers—a great and serviceable truth, put sternly and nakedly, and yet with all the clearness and brilliancy of a well-cut stone. "The nation," he says, "will make the government advance, like a coachman whom we have paid, and whose business it is to drive us not where he likes and how he likes, but where we choose to go, and by the road that suits us."

The two best of his pamphlets—I mean the two which show him at his bitterest and most forcible, and which aroused the greatest sensation—were, *The Simple Discourse of Paul-Louis, Vine-Dresser of la Chavonnière, to the Councillors of the Commune of Veretz, on the occasion of a Subscription proposed by his Excellency the Minister of the Interior for the Acquisition of Chambord*, and *The Pamphlet of Pamphlets*. The title of this former pamphlet, issued in 1821, explains its subject: the Castle of Chambord was to be purchased by public subscription, and presented to the young duke of Bordeaux. Thereupon the democratic ire of Paul-Louis was roused, and he poured forth a long unsavoury stream of

reminiscences and insinuations on the subject of that ancient abode of royalty. But before he does so he begins in the following simple and natural way :—

"If we had money enough not to know what to do with it, if all our debts were paid, our roads repaired, our poor relieved, our church first (for God goes before everything) paved, newly-roofed, and glazed; if we had still left some sum which could be spent out of the parish, I believe, my friends, that we ought to contribute, with our neighbours, to build the new bridge of Saint-Avertin, which, shortening by a good league the way from here to Tours, would, by the quick sale of our provisions, increase the price and the produce of the lands in the whole neighbourhood; that is, I believe, the best use to which we could put the money we do not want, when we have any. But to buy Chambord for the duke of Bordeaux,—I am not of that opinion, and should not wish it, even if we had the needful; for, according to me, the affair is bad for him, for us, and for Chambord. You will understand me, I hope, if you will listen to me; it is a holiday, and we have time to talk." [1]

And then he continues to describe the court :—

"Imagine what a court is . . . there are here neither wives nor children: listen; the court is an honest place, if you will, but very strange. I know little of the court of the present day; but I know—and who does not know?—that of the great King Louis XIV., the model of all, the court *par excellence*, of which so

[1] "Si nous avions de l'argent à n'en savoir que faire, toutes nos dettes payées, nos chemins reparés, nos pauvres soulagés, notre église d'abord (car Dieu passe avant tout) pavée, recouverte et vitrée, s'il nous restait quelque somme à pouvoir dépenser hors de cette commune, je crois, mes amis, qu'il faudrait contribuer, avec nos voisins, à refaire le pont de Saint-Avertin, qui, nous abrégeant d'une grande lieue le transport d'ici à Tours, par le prompt débit de nos denrées, augmenterait le prix et le produit des terres dans tous les environs ; c'est là, je crois, le meilleur emploi à faire de notre superflu, lorsque nous en aurons. Mais d'acheter Chambord pour le duc de Bordeaux, je n'en suis pas d'avis, et ne le voudrais pas, quand nous aurions de quoi, l'affaire étant, selon moi, mauvaise pour lui, pour nous et pour Chambord. Vous l'allez comprendre, j'espère, si vous m'écoutez ; il est fête, et nous avons le temps de causer."

many memoirs remain to us, wherein figure 'the woman Montespan and the girl la Vallière' . . . poisoning, debauchery of every kind, prostitution, in fact every crime and every disgrace, either openly asserted or insinuated. What! . . . do they bid you contribute your money for this monument of infamy, where the great lords and ladies, royal and noble, 'used to live in promiscuity'? Do they dare to ask of you any sentimental sacrifice on behalf of these royal and aristocratic sinners? 'Do you know that there is not in France a single noble family—that is to say, noble by race and ancient origin—which does not owe its fortune to women—you understand me?'"

So run the style and manner of Courier from beginning to end. His arguments are few, and rather suggested than maintained; his sentences are short, epigrammatic, biting. The *Simple Discourse* brought its author into some trouble. He was put on his trial for bringing the monarchy into contempt, and sentenced to two months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of two hundred francs; but this must have given him more satisfaction than annoyance. He came out a martyr; his popularity had been doubled; and he had the pleasure of knowing that he was considered a worthy heir of the best pamphleteers of the Revolution. Béranger said of him: "In M. Courier's place, I would not give these two months' of imprisonment for a hundred thousand francs."

The *Workman's Service-book of Paul-Louis during his Sojourn in Paris* and the *Village Gazette* preceded only by a short time the *Pamphlet of Pamphlets*, his last work, in which Courier attempts to place the pamphlet, as a literary production, on a right footing, laughs at the sneers of the ignorant, and quotes Pascal, Cicero, Demosthenes, St. Paul, and Franklin, as pamphleteers.

The death of Courier was a tragedy, and for five years a mystery. Whilst he was at the height of his reputation, on the 10th of April, 1825, his dead body was found in the wood surrounding his cottage, pierced by more than one bullet.

The excitement was great throughout France ; for there were many who suspected that his fate was due to the animosity of those whom he had attacked with his pen. His man-servant, Frémont, was accused of the murder, but unanimously acquitted ; and no clue could be discovered to the perpetrators of the crime. In 1830, however, the truth was brought to light in an unexpected manner. A half-witted and dissolute woman, Grivault, who resided near the spot, was riding one night past the scene of the murder, when her horse started, and almost threw her. In her terror she exclaimed : "My horse was nearly as much afraid as I was when they killed M. Courier." Her companion questioned her, and she finally admitted that she had seen Frémont and a couple of companions, one of whom had since died, shoot their master. Frémont could not be tried again for the crime of which he had been acquitted, but he bore witness against the man whom Grivault had implicated. The latter was acquitted by the jury, who seem to have thought that he was guilty only of concealing the murder. Frémont died within a few days of the trial by "the visitation of God."

Another pamphleteer and journalist, Hugues-Félicite-Robert de la Mennais,[1] born at Saint-Malo, the birthplace of Chateaubriand, was a Roman Catholic priest, and lived some years after the establishment of the Second Empire, but nearly all his works were written before that time. It has been said of him that he recalls the memory of Pascal by the spiritual tone of his writings. His youth was spent in solitude ; he was destined by his parents for the service of the Church ; and, if he had lived in the age of Bourdaloue, he would have been consecrated like him to the order of the Jesuits, and might have resembled him in his life and in his works. As it was, he became a priest in 1811, and had already published two years before *Reflections*

[1] 1782-1854.

on the State of the Church, in which he attacks indifference in religion, and proposes, as the sole remedy, free assemblies of the clergy. This book was seized and suppressed by the imperial police, and printed by la Mennais anew some years afterwards. When Napoleon returned from Elba to reign for a hundred days, la Mennais, who had written "that to study the genius of Bonaparte in the institutions which he had founded, was to sound the darkest depths of crime, and to seek the measure of human perversity," fled to England, and remained there for seven months. Soon appeared the first volume of his *Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion* (1817), wherein he gave promise of being a powerful apologist of Christianity, in an age when the Roman Catholic faith in France sorely needed an apologist. He states:

"The age which is the most diseased is not the one which is impassioned for error, but the one which neglects and disdains truth. . . . Religion, morality, honour, duty, the most sacred principles as well as the most noble sentiments, are only a kind of dreams, brilliant and light phantoms which disport themselves for a moment in far-away thoughts, soon to disappear without returning. No; never was anything like it seen, nor could even have been imagined. It needed long and persevering efforts, an indefatigable struggle of man with his conscience and reason, to reach at last this brutal recklessness. Contemplating with equal disgust truth and error, he pretends to believe that one cannot distinguish them, in order to confound them in a common contempt; the last degree of intellectual depravation at which he can arrive."[1]

He further declares that the source of all evil is the contempt for authority and the supremacy of individual reason. Few books have had such a rapid success, and forty thousand copies of this first volume were sold within a few years. In the second volume, published in 1820, he tried to prove

[1] Introduction, vol. i.

that the Catholic dogma and human tradition were in perfect harmony, and in the two last volumes, which appeared in 1824, he argues that Christianity alone possesses eminently the property of being perpetual and eternal. The *Essay* was vehemently attacked by prelates as well as by philosophers; and was followed by a *Defence of the Essay*, in which Lamennais further developed his system. He was now settled in Paris, and gave much of his time to journalism, in common with many others of his order; and, after writing for the *Conservateur*, he paid a visit to Rome, where he refused to be made a cardinal. On his return he wrote *On Religion, considered in its relations with the Civil and Political Order*, in which he claimed for Rome spiritual supremacy. This book drew upon him a judicial condemnation, and made him anew many enemies, above all amongst the French bishops. When the revolution of 1830 broke out he published a pamphlet, full of enthusiasm for liberty, and started, with Lacordaire, Montalembert, and others, a newspaper, *L'Avenir*, which took for its motto, "God and Liberty. The Pope and the People." This paper demanded separation between Church and State, the suppression of a State subsidy to ministers of religion, administrative decentralisation, extension of electoral rights, entire freedom of conscience and of instruction, freedom of the press, and the right to hold public meetings. His articles in this journal drew upon him ecclesiastical censure, and in spite of a journey which he made to Rome, accompanied by his two eminent *collaborateurs*, the Pope condemned the liberal theories of the *Avenir*, called liberty of conscience "the tainted source of indifferentism," and the freedom of the press "fatal, odious, and execrable." Unable at that period of his life to resist so grievous a condemnation, Lamennais formally submitted. But in 1834, when he saw that he had no longer any place in that Church which had bartered her liberty for the favour of the State, he published the *Words of a Believer*, in which he re-

tracted his recantation. This book was written in a sort of blank verse, and in a style borrowed from Biblical language, and was not published until Lamennais had hesitated about it a whole year. But then he stated that, "1°, I am conscious that by publishing it I fulfil a duty, because I see no salvation for the world except in the union of order, right, justice, and liberty ; 2°, the necessity of settling my position, which in the eyes of the public is now equivocal and false ; of cleansing my name, in the future, from the reproach of having connived at the horrible system of tyranny which at present weighs down the nations. If I must suffer for this it does not matter ; I shall not regret it. There is for each position a certain kind of courage, which it is shameful not to possess." The *Words of a Believer* is, in fact, as it has been called, a gospel of rebellion, full of indignant remonstrances against the slavery of orthodoxy. It made him many enemies ; nearly all his former friends abandoned him ; and two of them, Lacordaire and Combalot, wrote to him letters filled with insults. The Pope condemned this book, called it "small in size but immense in its perversity," and severely censured the "fallacious system by which it was attempted to found upon another basis than revelation certainty in matters of religion." An eminent Frenchman,[1] who has many points of similarity with Lamennais, says of it : "The two essential qualities of Lamennais, simplicity and grandeur, are unfolded quite leisurely in these little poems, which are pervaded by exquisite and true sentiment. He created, with reminiscences of the Bible and of the ecclesiastical language, this harmonious and grand manner which realises a phenomenon unique in the literary world of a *pastiche* of genius." Henceforth Lamennais remained a consistent Liberal, and issued several pamphlets and books of a controversial nature in a distinctly liberal

[1] E. Renan, "Lamennais and his Writings," in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, August 1857.

sense. His later years were spent chiefly in a translation of the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, a work of average merit, with abundant evidence of more than average power.

Altogether different in training and in capacity was Charles Nodier,[1] born at Besançon, the son of a lawyer, who received an education as varied as that of Lamennais had been restricted. Nodier was a scholar, a poet, a novelist, a scientist, a grammarian, having an insatiable appetite for knowledge, and the restless spirit of a man whose boyhood had been impressed by the events of the republic. His earliest work, published before he was twenty years old, was an account of the *Use of Antennæ to Insects.* In 1803 he produced a novel, the *Painter of Salzburg;* and in the following year a book of verse, the *Essays of a Young Bard.* Among his novels, *Jean Sbogar, Smarra,* and *Trilby,* are fantastically but well written. In 1818 he published a work of an entirely different order, a *Dictionnaire Raisonné des Onomatopées françaises;* and ten years later appeared his *Critical Examination of the French Dictionaries,* a work of vast erudition, and bearing witness to great and conscientious labour. In his youth he had written a poem, the *Napoleone,* which obtained a great success amongst the enemies of the Government, and contained some bitter attacks against Bonaparte. As a journalist, he wrote in a Liberal paper, *The French Citizen,* subsequently in *The Journal of the Empire,* and during the Restoration, in the *Journal des Debats* and the *Quotidienne.* His imagination often mastered him, so that his facts can but seldom be relied upon, but he possesses a clear and excellent style; and he deserves the description given of him by Sainte-Beuve, as a "futile, facile, agreeable, and genuinely charming writer. Perhaps a brief extract will be held to justify the praise :—

"The incomparable minister, whose private secretary I had the honour to be when ministers were yet wont to reply to

[1] 1780-1844.

letters which were written to them, having complained one day of my regular want of punctuality, I tried, like a school-boy, to excuse myself by the pleasure I had taken in stopping before Punch's show. 'That is all very well,' he said, smiling; 'but how does it happen that I have never met you there?' . . . It was a sublime speech, revealing a vast scope of political study and opinion. Unfortunately, he only retained his portfolio fifty-three hours and a half, and I did not pity him, for I knew the force of the stoical character of his mind. . . . Notabilities are not lacking before Punch's show; everybody passes it in turn; few are worthy to pause there. The dull idler leaves it in scorn; the *flâneur*, eager for new sensations, salutes it at most with a look of recognition; the pedant, hardened in his stupid knowledge, blushes as he skims it with a timid glance. You need never fear there the rude contact of the coarse mob with its stale and brutish tastes, the scum of insurrection and orgies, which crowd, as a dirty rabble, around the monsters to be seen at the street corners, around the gymnic quarrels of public-houses and the scaffold; it has seen children without heads, and children with two heads; it has seen heads cut off; it cares no more for Punch.

"The ordinary customers of Punch are of a much better rank. The student, fresh from the provinces, who still dreams of the charms of family and of the farewell his mother bade him. . . . The young deputy, a patriot by conviction, an honest man instinctively, who cares not if he is called up to vote, but comes to meditate for one moment with Punch, about the rational institutions of society. . . . The impoverished peer who leaps from his cab, as he has become more moderate, to take example by Punch, and learn from him to contemn human grandeurs. . . . The scholar broken down by labour whom Punch amuses and makes young again, or the philosopher, exhausted by useless speculations, who comes, as a last resource, to lay down his deceptive doctrines at the invisible feet of Punch."[1] . . .

[1] "L'incomparable ministre dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être le secrétaire particulier dans le temps où les ministres répondaient encore aux lettres qui leur étaient écrites, se plaignant un jour de mes inexactitudes régulières, j'essayai de m'excuser comme un écolier, par le plaisir que j'avais pris à

m'arrêter quelque temps devant la loge de Polichinelle. 'A la bonne heure,' me dit-il en souriant; 'mais comment se fait-il que je ne vous y aie pas rencontré?' . . . Mot sublime, qui révèle une immense portée d'études et de vues politiques. Malheureusement il ne conserva le portefeuille que cinquante-trois heures et demie, et je ne le plaignis point, parce que je connaissais la force et la stoïcité de son esprit. . . . Les notabilités n'y manquent pas devant la loge de Polichinelle. Tout le monde y passe à son tour! Peu sont dignes de s'y fixer. L'oisif hébété la laisse en dédain, le flâneur impatient de nouvelles émotions la salue tout au plus d'un regard de connaissance; le pédant, pétrifié dans sa sotte science, la cligne en rougissant d'un coup d'œil honteux. Vous n'y craindrez pas le contact effronté de la grossière populace aux goûts blasés et abrutis, écume de l'émeute et de l'orgie, qui se roule, sale cohue, autour des monstres du carrefour, des disputes gymniques du cabaret et des échafauds du palais; elle a vu des enfants sans têtes et des enfants à deux têtes; elle a vu des têtes coupées: elle ne se soucie plus de Polichinelle.

La clientèle ordinaire de Polichinelle est beaucoup mieux composée. C'est l'étudiant, fraîchement émoulu de sa province, qui rêve encore les douceurs de sa famille et les adieux de sa mère. . . . C'est le jeune député, patriote de conviction, honnête homme d'instinct, qui brave l'appel nominal pour venir méditer un moment avec Polichinelle sur les institutions rationnelles de la société. . . . C'est le pair deshérité qui descend de son cabriolet, devenu plus modeste, pour se former au mépris des grandeurs humaines, par l'exemple de Polichinelle. . . . C'est l'érudit cassé de travail que Polichinelle délasse et reverdit, ou le philosophe épuisé de spéculations inutiles qui vient, en désespoir de cause, humilier ses doctrines trompées aux pieds invisibles de Polichinelle."

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1. The New School.

The Restoration was to be signalised by the formation and growth of a literary school, to which some of the happiest products of the present century are to be attributed. For two hundred years French versification had been cast in the mould fashioned for it by Ronsard and Malherbe. Few poets had dared to depart from the classical model, the stereotyped phrases, the regular rhyming twelve-syllabled couplets, which form the bulk of the poetry of France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even Voltaire, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and André Chénier himself, had not been able to shake off the constraint wherein their genius was fettered by the supposed inviolability of the neo-classical canons. Thus, though we have had from them and their contemporaries a few fine dramas, a few fine attempts at lofty philosophical poems, and a fair number of really excellent odes, we have seen no lyric poetry of the highest order; whilst, up to the time of the Revolution, the ballad, so characteristic of the poetry of England and Scotland, and to a less extent of Germany, was all but unknown in France. The Revolution, however, had worked a complete change in the character of French literature, and of French social and political life; and though the Empire had checked the development of the new types, the Restoration could no longer delay the regeneration of the national genius. And in no respect was this national re-

generation more genuine, more independent of external influences, more superbly triumphant over every obstacle, than amongst the song-writers and romantic poets of the Restoration. Let us hear, on this subject, the evidence of one of the latter class, namely of Lamartine.

"I remember[1] that, at my entrance upon life, there was but one opinion concerning the incurable decay, the actual death of that mysterious faculty of the human mind which we call poetry. It was the period of the Empire, the hour of the incarnation of the materialist philosophy of the eighteenth century in government and in manners. All those mathematicians who then monopolised speech, and crushed us younger men under the insolent tyranny of their triumph, believed that they had for ever exhausted in us that which they had withered and destroyed in themselves—the whole moral, divine, and melodious part of human thought. Nothing can picture, to those who did not experience it, the supreme barrenness of this epoch. It was the satanic smile of an infernal spirit who has succeeded in degrading a whole generation. These men had the same feeling of triumphant impotence in their heart and on their lips, when they said to us: 'Love, philosophy, religion, enthusiasm, liberty, poetry—all are naught. Calculation and force, figures and sword, everything is there! We believe only what is proved, we feel only what can be touched; poetry died with spiritualism, whereof it was born.' And they spoke the truth; it had died in their souls, died in them and around them. By a sure and prophetic instinct of their destiny they trembled lest it should come to life again with liberty; they cast to the winds the slightest shoots, as fast as they sprang up in their path, in their schools, in their lyceums, in their primary schools, especially among their military and polytechnic students. Everything was organised against this resurrection of moral and poetical

[1] *Des Destinées de la Poésie*, written in 1834.

sentiment; it was a universal league of mathematical studies against thought and poetry. Figures alone were permitted, honoured, protected, and paid. As figures do not reason; as they are a miraculous passive instrument of tyranny, never asking whereon it is employed, making no inquiry whether it is used for the oppression of the human race or for its deliverance, for the murder of the spirit or for its emancipation, the military leader of this epoch would have no other missionary, no other tool; and this tool served him well. There was not an idea in Europe that was not trodden under foot, not a mouth which was not gagged by its leaden hand. From this moment I abhorred figures, the negation of all thought; and I have retained against this exclusive and jealous power of mathematics the same feeling, the same horror, which remains with the convict against the hard and icy irons riveted upon his limbs, whose cold and overwhelming pressure he thinks that he feels whenever he hears the clinking of a chain. Mathematics were the chains of human thought. I breathe again, for they are broken."

How were the chains broken? by whom? with what result? We know how Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël had contributed to foster the romantic taste of the age; how with Napoleon they had been under a cloud, and how the Restoration established their popularity and influence. We have seen, also, how the poets and romancists of England and Germany affected the minds of men who, like Lamartine, reacted against the bureaucracy of the past twenty years. Let us find further evidence by casting our eyes over a few numbers of the *Muse Française*, the literary organ of a sort of novel hôtel de Rambouillet, whereof Chateaubriand was the accepted guide and philosopher.[1] This school was for the most part

[1] "Under his standard we must march in morality as in poetry, in religion as in politics, if we would move straight and far."—*Muse Française*, vol. ii. p. 351.

Catholic and monarchical in its tendencies; for to be so was little else than an irresistible fashion under Louis XVIII. "A new generation of literary men," wrote one of the band,[1] "seek to unite on the same altar the scattered flames of our holy beliefs." Victor Hugo, then a young man of one-and-twenty, who had published his first odes—the "sublime child," as Chateaubriand called him in the *Conservateur*—began life in the same groove. "It is to strengthen the divine breath, to rekindle the heavenly fire, that all genuinely superior minds in these days tend." The *Muse Française* was the vehicle of such ideas as these; as well of the theory as of the practical illustration of the new sensational and romantic creed. It counted as its contributors in prose and verse not only those whom we have mentioned, but also Alfred de Vigny, Emile Deschamps, Madame Sophie Gay, and her daughter Delphine.

§ 2. The National and Social Poets.

The romantic school was destined to be still further developed in the decades which succeeded that of the Restoration, and it is in connection with a future period that we shall do well to improve our acquaintance with them. To the Restoration itself more strictly belong the works of two poets of a somewhat different order—national rather than romantic, social rather than sentimental: Casimir Delavigne[2] and Pierre-Jean de Béranger.[3] The former, born at Havre in the year which brought Louis XVI. to the guillotine, was a dramatist of much industry and some success;[4] but his

[1] Soumet, *Ibid.* vol. ii., p. 172.

[2] 1793-1843. [3] 1780-1857. [4] See below, bk. ix., ch. 6.

earliest triumphs were due to the *Messéniennes*, a volume of odes inspired, in the first instance, by the disasters of his country under the Empire. The form which he had adopted and found so suitable for deploring the battle of Waterloo, he continued to employ, twice to celebrate the memory of Joan of Arc—a subject manifestly akin to the former one—and afterwards to enshrine his reminiscences of the history of Greece. This latter subject was suggested to him by the dream of Greek re-unification which was entertained by so many poets and even statesmen of that epoch, and which allured the mind of Byron in particular with such irresistible fascination. The title of these poems was borrowed by Delavigne from the *Anacharsis* of Barthélemy, as the poet himself tells us in his preface to the collected odes. "Every one," he says, "has read in the *Voyage of Anacharsis* the elegies on the misfortunes of Messene. I thought that I might borrow from Barthélemy the title of *Messéniennes*, to describe a kind of national poetry which no one has yet tried to introduce into our literature." Delavigne's instinct did not mislead him. It was in reality a new chord which he was striking; and his great and immediate success was due to the fact that he genuinely felt the ideas which he expressed in such beautiful language, and which his generation felt no less genuinely than himself.

His poems on Napoleon exactly hit the mood of lamentation in which France had been left by the reverses culminating in Waterloo. Delavigne had read Shakspeare, and it was not without indebtedness to *Richard III.* that he represented the fallen Emperor asleep in his tent, and the phantoms of his greatest battles reproaching him for his suppression of liberty :—

> "Yet wouldst thou reign, if such had been thy will.
> Thou, Freedom's son, thy mother hast dethroned;
> Armed 'gainst her rights by power a moment owned,

Thou hadst resolved her life to crush and kill;
But, the tomb dug for her
Or soon, or late, devours the despot still:
The tyrant falls or dies; she knows no sepulchre."[1]

In some of his *Messéniennes*, especially in the later ones, published in 1827, Delavigne takes a distinctively liberal, and even aggressive tone. He was a member of the Opposition party under the Restoration—of the party which displayed the vigour of its opinions in 1830, and prepared the way for 1848. In his fugitive poems he was still more in contrast with the serious, almost devout spirit of the school whereof Chateaubriand and Lamartine were the principal ornaments. He was in sympathy, if not in fact, a pagan, and approached the poetic standpoint of the age of Voltaire.[2]

Béranger was an infinitely greater man than Delavigne—a greater man indeed than any of his older contemporaries, and a greater poet than France had known for a very long time. Type and model of the true *chansonnier*, a song-writer in whom his country and his age found themselves reflected—in whom Villon lived again, and whose spirit breathed the humour and the satire of Rabelais—Béranger is unique in the annals of French literature, and would occupy a prominent position in the literature of the world. Save for his auto-

[1] "Tu régnerois encore si tu l'avais voulu.
Fils de la liberté, tu détrônas ta mère;
Armé contre ses droits d'un pouvoir éphémère,
Tu croyais l'accabler, tu l'avais résolu;
Mais le tombeau creusé pour elle
Dévore tôt ou tard le monarque absolu.
Un tyran tombe ou meurt; seule elle est immortelle."

[2] Witness the following verses:—

"Alors que ma froide paupière
Pressera mes yeux à jamais,
O Naïs, pour faveur dernière,
Couronne moi de myrtes frais."

And again:

"De ton souffle viens m'embrâser,
Ah! que sur tes lèvres de flamme
Je puisse déposer mon âme;
Que j'expire dans un baiser."

biography, a few letters preserved by his friends, the records of his imprisonments, and his rare business relations, we should know next to nothing of his actual life ; for he clung to the obscurity in which he was born, and which best suited his temperament. His father was bookkeeper at a grocer's, his mother a milliner ; and hardly was he brought into the world when the latter threw him on the hands of her own parents, whilst the father deserted both wife and child.[1] The grandparents, however, persisted in loving the boy ; perhaps they were not long in seeing the stuff of which he was made ; perhaps they did their best to make him what he was. He read all the poetry that he could lay hands on, the *Henriade* and a translation of Tasso, at his grandfather's ; and, when the latter was unable to support him any longer, he went to his aunt's, an innkeeper at Péronne, where he studied Racine, Voltaire, and Fénelon. His education seems to have been stopped when he could read and write ; and he was but a boy when he became a clerk to a popular Republican magistrate in Péronne. Even this work appears to have been too much for him ; and he was apprenticed to a printer, with whom he stayed until his father, who professed royalist principles, sent for him to Paris. The son was dutiful, and assisted the father to the best of his ability ; first in a bank, and when that collapsed in 1798, in a circulating library. He lived by himself, "in a garret on the sixth story on the Boulevard Saint-Martin ;" so he tells us in his autobiography ;—but a still better description of his life at this

[1] This worthy father had prefixed the coveted "de" to his name ; and Béranger sings in one place :—

"Eh quoi ! j'apprends que l'on critique
Le *de* qui précède mon nom.
Etes-vous de noblesse antique ?
Moi noble ? Oh ! vraiment, messieurs, non !
Non, d'ancienne chevalerie
Je n'ai le brevet sur velin :
Je ne sais qu'aimer ma patrie.
Je suis vilain et très-vilain."

period is that which he gives us in his poem of *Le Grenier* which Thackeray has translated into English; and of which we give the first couplet:—

"With pensive eyes the little room I view
Where in my youth I weathered it so long,
With a wild mistress, a staunch friend or two,
And a light heart still breaking into song.
Making a mock of life and all its cares,
Rich in the glory of my rising sun,
Lightly I vaulted up four pair of stairs,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one." [1]

At the age of twenty-four Fortune turned her wheel for the light-hearted poet. He forwarded a bundle of verses to Lucien Bonaparte; and the latter, who had discrimination and a kind heart, sent for Béranger, and gave him a pension of a thousand francs a year—to which Lucien had himself just become entitled on being elected a member of the Institute. Shortly afterwards Béranger obtained a position as literary assistant to the painter Landon, whom he aided in editing the *Annals of the Museum*. A few years later he was appointed clerk in the secretary's office of the University, and remained there twelve years, never receiving a higher salary than two thousand francs. The good points in Béranger's character showed themselves throughout his life, whether he was in prosperity or adversity. He undertook to support his grandmother, whom his father's bank had ruined; and he put his sister, at her own request, into a convent. His hand was always open to those who

[1] "Je viens revoir l'asile où ma jeunesse
De la misère a subi les leçons.
J'avais vingt ans, une folle maîtresse,
De francs amis et l'amour des chansons.
Bravant le monde et les sots et les sages,
Sans avenir, riche de mon printemps,
Leste et joyeux, je montais six étages.
Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans!"

were in need. His religion, by whatever name it ought to be called, was a religion of benevolence and charity. Chateaubriand had for some time a considerable influence over Béranger, and tried to put an orthodox veneer upon his faith; but the attempt had to be abandoned as hopeless. Béranger never scoffs at true religion; but he is not orthodox.

It took Béranger some time to realise the fact that he was the great song-writer of his age; that his pastime was really the great vocation and serious labour of his life; and that, let his ambition fly ever so high, he could do nothing better than the *Petit Homme gris*, the *Gueux*, the *Roi d'Yvetot*, and others of the songs of his youth. These earlier efforts had already made him popular and famous; they were handed about, repeated, learned by heart, and sung at the new *Caveau* —a club of good fellows founded on the model of that which, in the eighteenth century, had been frequented by Piron, Collé, and Panard. Béranger was elected a member of the *Caveau*, of which Désaugiers[1] was president; but it was not altogether to his mind. The staple product of its muse was drinking-songs; and Béranger was something more than a rollicking roysterer. So far, indeed, as his popularity and fame were concerned, he might have been anything; for his realistic songs, each one embodying a page of history or a phase of current national opinion, took deep hold of the minds of his fellow-countrymen. It was in 1815 that the first printed collection of his poems was given to the world; and forthwith he was "warned" by the police of the Restoration. In 1821 he printed a second series, and at the same time resigned his clerkship. This resignation did not save him from prosecution and a sentence of three months' imprisonment. It was enough for his officious persecutors that he was not a partisan of the son of Saint-Louis; he was too powerful, too clever, too free in thought and expression, to be allowed to write with

[1] 1772-1827.

impunity. Moreover, in the pious *régime* of the Restoration, a prophet of the *dieu des bonnes gens* could not hope for a peaceful obscurity. A few years later he issued a volume containing the *Sacre de Charles le Simple*, the *Infiniment Petits*, and other songs with a manifest application to the dignities of the day. This time (1828) he had to pay a fine of ten thousand francs, and to undergo a nine months' imprisonment. When he was again released he was fairly and unreservedly a member of the Liberal Opposition, and spared neither government nor Jesuits.[1] The Revolution of 1830, which set up Louis Philippe in the place of Charles X., put a stop to persecution. His pen was free ; and he used it to such purpose that after the next Revolution, in 1848, he was returned by the department of the Seine as member of the Constituent Assembly, by more than two hundred thousand votes. It was not by his own choice that this incongruous honour fell upon him ; and after some days he entreated to be allowed to resign a post for which he was altogether unfitted.

Not the least eccentric chapter of Béranger's life is that which records his connection with Judith Frère—the companion of his poverty and obscurity, and the object of his life-long affection. She had been an *ouvrière* when the plain little

[1] In 1829 he wrote (*Mes Jours gras en* 1729) :—

> " Dans mon vieux carquois où font brèche
> Les coups de vos juges maudits,
> Il me reste encore une flèche :
> J'écris dessus : Pour Charles Dix."

And presently afterwards, apostrophising himself :—

> " Tes traits aigus lancés au trône même
> En retombant aussitôt ramassés,
> De près, de loin, par le peuple qui t'aime,
> Volaient en chœur vers le but relancés.
> Puis quand le trône ose brandir son foudre,
> De vieux fusils l'abattent en trois jours ;
> Pour tous les coups tirés dans son velours
> Combien ta muse a fabriqué de poudre !"

clerk, friendless and starving in his garret *au sixième*, had chosen her for his mate; and he sings of her with infinite pathos:—

"Good heavens! how pretty she is,
And I, I am so ugly, so ugly."

The time came when the poet's friends were amongst the most celebrated men in France; and it was at the height of his fame and influence that he chose to present Judith as the mistress of his house. He addresses her in one of the most touching of all his poems, *The Good Old Woman*:—

"You will grow old, alas! my mistress fair;
You will grow old, and I shall be no more. . . .

While the eyes search beneath your wrinkled cheek
For charms which long ago my verse adorned;
Young folks, who tales of lovers ever seek,
Will ask, 'Who was the friend so deeply mourned?'
Let of my love, if you remember it,
The fire, the madness, e'en the doubt be told;
And, good old dame! while by the hearth you sit,
Repeat his songs, who was your friend of old. . . .

And, cherished object, when my empty fame
Shall to your life's decline some solace bring;
When your weak hands shall on my picture's frame
Some flowers place, with each returning spring,
Then to that world unseen your thoughts commit,
Where we shall ever fresh communion hold.
And, good old dame, while by the hearth you sit,
Repeat his songs, who was your friend of old."[1]

[1] "Vous vieillirez, ô ma belle maitresse!
Vous vieillirez, et je ne serai plus. . . .

Lorsque les yeux chercheront sous vos rides
Les traits charmants qui m'auront inspiré,
Des doux récits les jeunes gens avides
Diront: Quel fut cet ami tant pleuré?

But Judith died first of the two; and the simple old man, full of love for his fellow-creatures, with an eager faith in their progress, in their wisdom, in their goodness, lived on in peace and honour to the age of seventy-seven. Cousin, Villemain, Thiers, were at the deathbed of Béranger. He had been a great sufferer towards the last; and, as his friends stood round him in his final struggle, he gathered strength to bid them farewell. "Adieu, my friends, adieu!" these were his words. "Live on; you shall have, even here, a better world. It is God's will that men should cease to suffer so much. . . . He cannot help it—*il y est obligé*," and, turning his face from one to the other, he repeated: "*Obligé* is the right word." It was the word of his whole life; he died a prophet, as he had lived an apostle.

Béranger's songs have been favourites in all countries, and he has found many partial translators. I have given a verse of one of Thackeray's renderings; let me add one from another translator,[1] from a poem, in which the *chansonnier*, impressed by the same feeling which inspired several of Delavigne's *Messéniennes*, gives expression to the popular worship of Napoleon, in *The Remembrances of the People*:—

De mon amour peignez, s'il est possible,
L'ardeur, l'ivresse, et même les soupçons;
Et bonne vieille, au coin d'un feu paisible,
De votre ami répétez les chansons. . . .

Objet chéri, quand mon renom futile
De vos vieux ans charmera les douleurs,
A mon portrait quand votre main débile,
Chaque printemps, suspendra quelques fleurs,
Levez les yeux vers ce monde invisible
Où pour toujours nous nous réunissons;
Et bonne vieille, au coin d'un feu paisible,
De votre ami répétez les chansons."

[1] The late Robert Brough, who, if he had not died young, might have been better known to posterity, and whose memory is embalmed in the hearts of his friends, has left spirited translations of many of Béranger's songs scattered in different magazines. It is to be regretted that they have never been collected in a volume.

Well, my dears, by kings attended,
Through the village street he passed.
(I was then—the time goes fast—
But newly wed); the sight was splendid.
Up the hill and past the door,
Here he walked—it seems to-day—
He a little cocked hat wore,
And a coat of woollen gray.
I was frightened at his view;
But he said, to calm my fear,
"Good-day, my dear."
Grandam, did he speak to you?
Did he speak to you?"[1]

This worship of Napoleon Béranger carried to excess. He embodied his enthusiasm for the "Napoleonic Legend" in many songs, which, like *Il n'est pas mort, La leçon d'histoire, Madame Mère,* were far from being his best, and which, by a not uncommon hazard, became the most popular airs of his lyre. There are, in fact, two men in Béranger—not in the eyes of those who regard him merely from an artistic point of view: the politician and the poet. When we say politician, our remark must be only understood to mean the influence the voice of Béranger exercised on politics. Some of his greatest admirers can hardly forgive him for raising the popularity of the name of Napoleon. In M. Thiers and Béranger they see two great men whose indiscreet ardour and unreasoning partiality are mainly responsible for the resurrection of imperialism in France, and whose works, on the whole, have done more harm than good. Hard as this may seem,

[1] "Mes enfants, dans ce village,
Suivi de rois, il passa.
Voilà bien longtemps de ça:
Je venais d'entrer en ménage
A pied grimpant le coteau
Où pour voir je m'étais mise,
Il avait petit chapeau
Avec redingote grise.
Près de lui je me troublai;
Il me dit: Bonjour, ma chère,
Bonjour, ma chère.
Il vous a parlé grand' mère!
Il vous a parlé?"

especially to the memory of Béranger, it is difficult to deny that the allegation is well founded. All that is popular may prove either very beneficent or very pernicious. Now in two different classes of literature, no works were more read than Béranger's and M. Thiers'; and as many of the former's were enthusiastic praises of Bonaparte, whilst the second's *History of the Consulate* was one continual chant of ardent Bonapartism, the prestige of the imperial name, which had momentarily collapsed, and might possibly have died out, rose brighter than ever through the efforts of two highly popular men. Béranger was no Bonapartist in the full meaning of the word, and M. Thiers was even the enemy of the Second Empire: but still they both contributed to its advent. A ready excuse, however, offers itself on behalf of the famous singer: in his time Bonapartism was rather a species of opposition than a distinct partisanship; Republicans and believers in the "Napoleonic Legend" under the Restoration, huddled under a common denomination, until it became difficult to say whether Bonapartism included Republicanism, or *vice versâ*. Béranger, be it remembered, was before all things a *frondeur*, a *bourgeois*: the middle class, of which he was so complete an incarnation, has at all times been refractory; it always found delight in flinging stones at the powers that be. Such was the character of Béranger; he was a born member of the Opposition, gay, good-naturedly sarcastic, witty; above all, with an inherent liking for Liberalism, and a hatred for priestcraft. But with him, as with many more, the name of Napoleonism and that of liberty were blended in a curious compound. On the other hand, Béranger would not have been a *bourgeois* if Chauvinism had not capped the whole. He liked wit, fun, irony, and bombast; he was at the same time Monsieur Prudhomme and Gavroche; uttered in a breath a mock and a piece of maudlin sentimentalism; was in short a curious mixture of finesse and candour, of simplicity

and good sense. Certain men are apt to be sensible except on hobbies, when they lose their powers of reasoning, and as it were become the caricature of their own selves. Thus Béranger grew prosy and somewhat grotesque when he bestrode the hobby called Chauvinism, and this feature of his work—unhappily not the smallest—is by far the least edifying. His temperament too closely resembled that of the *bourgeoisie* as a class not to oblige him to adapt himself to the fluctuations and caprices of opinion. Béranger was not the leader of the public (save in the Napoleonic Legend); he was the voice of the prevailing dispositions of the hour. He never stood alone, or even with a minority; in reading his songs his countrymen found their leanings melodiously and pungently rendered. Hence his immense popularity.

However, *bourgeois* as he was (the term is not always complimentary) Béranger, with his foibles, with his melodramatic enthusiasm for military glory, had a clear mind and a lofty soul. He loved his country, and he loved men; and, united to the gaiety of his muse the heart of a true poet. His melancholy strains are chiefly found amongst his posthumous songs. They display a tenderness of feeling, a profound appreciation of nature, an oblivion of insults and trespasses, that belong only to the great and good. He rises to a great height, and the nobleness of his sentiments loses nothing—nay, gains—by being expressed in his own crisp verses, apparently so easily constructed, and of such limpid simplicity. What can be more touching than the opening lines of *My Stick*, an ingenious address to his old companion, his stick, wherein a soft melancholy throughout tempers energy of expression?—

"To walk[1] the fields the genial sun gives sign;
With flowers crowned is every day that flies;

[1] I owe this translation, as well as the following, of Béranger to Henry Carrington.

Come, comrade, humble staff, cut from the vine,
The friend that fortune in its mirth supplies.
From what famed vineyard didst thou joyance drain?
Its merits have I sung at banquet gay?
If erst thy sap has led my steps astray,
Thou dost alone my failing age sustain.
Across the woods, the fields, the meads among,
Let's go and glean full many a flower and song.

Come, far from fools with me communion hold;
To thee my secret musings I confide;
You hear me sing, with voice now weak and old,
Tender regrets, great memories that abide.
In cold and snow, when rains and torrents come,
The thunder peals, and raging winds are mad;
Then as I walk and dream, or grieved or glad,
'Neath my old hat what swarms of fancies hum
Across the woods, the fields, the meads among,
Let's go and glean full many a flower and song.[1]"

Here is another charming sample of the same strain; it is extracted from *The Falling Stars*:—

[1] "Le soleil aux champs d'aller nous fait signe;
Chaque jour s'enfuit de fleurs couronné.
Viens, mon compagnon, humble cep de vigne,
Ami qu'en riant le sort m'a donné.
De quel cru fameux versas-tu l'ivresse
L'ai je célébré dans un gai repas?
Si jadis la sève égara mes pas,
Toi seul aujourd'hui soutiens ma vieillesse
A travers bois, prés et moissons
Allons glaner fleurs et chansons

Viens loin des fâcheux méditer ensemble;
Je me fie à toi de tous mes secrets.
Tu m'entends chanter d'une voix qui tremble
De grands souvenirs, de tendres regrets.
Au froid, à la neige, au flot des ondées,
Au bruit du tonnerre, au fracas du vent,
Combien triste ou gai, quand je vais revant,
Sous mon vieux chapeau bourdonnent d'idées?
A travers bois, prés et moissons
Allons glaner fleurs et chansons."

"Shepherd, you say each has a star
In Heaven, which his fate decides."
"Yes, child; such mystic lights there are
But night their guiding lustre hides."
"Shepherd, they say the azure skies
Keep not their secret from your ears:
What then that star that madly flies,
Flies and falls and disappears?"

"My child e'en now a man expires;
His star this very moment sinks
Amid the friends whom mirth inspires,
He joins the song and gaily drinks.
In tranquil happy sleep he lies;
His friends around, the wine is near;
See! a fresh star across the skies
Doth fall and fall and disappear.

"Child, that pure, lovely star doth move,
For one herself as pure and bright;
A happy girl whose happy love,
An equal passion doth requite.
Upon her brow her mother ties
The wedding wreath; the fane she nears.
Another star across the skies
Falls and falls and disappears!

"That star that Heaven so quickly cleaves,
Marks some great noble lately born;
The cradle that he vacant leaves
Do purple pomp and gold adorn.
Minions with poisonous flatteries
Were eager to seduce his ears:
Another star across the skies
Falls and falls and disappears." [1]

[1] "Berger, tu dis que notre étoile
Règle nos jours et brille aux cieux."
"Oui, mon enfant; mais dans son voile
La nuit la dérobe à nos yeux."
"Berger, sur cet azur tranquille
De lire on te croit le secret:
Quelle est cette étoile qui file,
Qui file, file, et disparait?"

It is difficult to assign an adequate place to the great singer amongst his contemporaries. His verses resemble nobody else's, his wit is of a peculiar kind, his satire keen, and his heart full of kindness. There was only one Béranger; and, conspicuous as was his individuality, it is in nowise intruded into that of others. "What is fundamental and essential in him," wrote a critic who was not always Béranger's friend, "in his lofty probity, the elevation of his soul, his indelible plebeian character; this would atone, if necessary, for many minor sins and affectations. One must always take into account, when one judges him, his virtue, his moral strength, the sentiment which has made him play a great part in political crises, and sometimes subdue the most violent men with the sole word of 'mother country.' Thus, violent men themselves felt honoured in recognising his authority and his devotion." This judgment, one of the most sincere passed by Sainte-Beuve, will not appear partial when it is remembered that he had for Béranger the antipathy which he felt for Balzac.

"Mon enfant, un mortel expire;
Son étoile tombe à l'instant.
Entre amis que la joie inspire,
Celui-ci buvait en chantant.
Heureux il s'endort immobile
Auprès du vin qu'il célébrait.
Encore une étoile qui file,
Qui file, file et disparait.

"Mon enfant, qu'elle est pure et belle!
C'est celle d'un objet charmant:
Fille heureuse, amante fidèle,
On l'accorde au plus tendre amant:
Des fleurs ceignent son sein nubile,
Et de l'hymen l'autel est pret. . . .
Encore une étoile qui file,
Qui file, file, et disparait.

"Mon fils, c'est l'étoile rapide
D'un très grand seigneur nouveau-né.
Le berceau qu'il a laissé vide
D'or et de pourpre était orné.
Des poisons qu'un flatteur distille
C'était à qui le nourrirait. . . .
Encore une étoile qui file,
Qui file, file et disparait.'

BOOK IX.

THE REIGN OF LOUIS PHILIPPE.

CHAPTER I.

§ 1. The Historians.

After each epoch of unusual activity, and especially activity in civil or international warfare, literature has come to look as a matter of course for the advent of historians of a higher order than the mere writers of memoirs and annals who find their subjects in the commonplace occurrences of every successive generation. The revolutions of empires and dynasties naturally create their own historians; and whatever may be thought as to the interval of time which ought to elapse between a memorable epoch and the writing of its history, the fact remains that a notable era in the progress of a nation is almost always signalised by a notable historical phase in that nation's literature. It was so in ancient Greece and Rome; it was so in France and England during the later middle ages; it has been so especially in these two countries, and in Germany, in the nineteenth century. Not by any means that the labours of the historians to whom I am referring have been confined to the events of their own countries in the times which immediately preceded them; for the special faculty being once evoked and encouraged, it is thenceforth applied to the elucidation of epochs divided from the present one by centuries of time, and to the history

of countries foreign to that in which the historian had his birth. Thus in France no great historian adorned the eighteenth century, whilst the nineteenth has already produced a Thiers, a Guizot, a Michelet, a Thierry, a Henri Martin, a Louis Blanc, and a Mignet. But whilst Thiers, Louis Blanc, Michelet, and Mignet are historians of their own age, the others, manifestly belonging to the same school, and owing the special determination of their faculties to similar causes, have gone back as far as the Merovingians, the Norman invasion of England, and the Renaissance, and abroad as far as England and Germany, for their subjects.

Louis-Adolphe Thiers[1] has a double right to be placed at the head of this list, by virtue of the eminence to which he has attained, and because he was the first to break through the narrow circle of contemporary annalists, who described merely what they had seen and what had made an impression—a just or an unjust one—upon their minds. De Maistre, Necker, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Burke in England, had done invaluable work in their way, but they had not written history. It was reserved for Thiers to be the first historian of his century. Born at Marseilles, related on his mother's side to the Chéniers, he received a classical education in his native town, studied law at Aix, and was crowned by the Academy in 1820 for a eulogy of Vauvenargues. Encouraged by this success, and moved by an ardent desire to make himself a name, he came up to Paris in 1823, in company with his friend and fellow-student Mignet, and published in the same year a book on the *Pyrenees, or the South of France in November and December* 1822. He had brought with him to the capital a letter of recommendation to the restless and wordy orator Manuel, who had just been expelled from the Assembly for his extreme attitude of opposition to the Government, and who

[1] 1797.

was consequently in high favour with the Liberal public. Manuel introduced him to Casimir Périer, General Foy, Laffitte — the financier of the Restoration — and other men of standing and influence. Thiers had confidence, wit, and indomitable perseverance, and he made the most of the opportunities thus thrown in his way. His education had been of a democratic tinge, and he threw himself into the arms of the Opposition party. Of course journalism became his staff, as it has been the staff of so many a young man of letters in that and in succeeding generations. He found work on the *Constitutionnel*, and his articles were distinguished at once by their force, their clearness, and their systematic arrangement.

But it was not to be a simple journalist that Thiers had come up to the capital. Scarcely was he settled in his garret in the Passage Montesquieu when he applied himself with energy to write the *History of the French Revolution*, a work which occupied him for the best part of five years, and of which a hundred and fifty thousand copies were sold within a comparatively short time. In the preparation of this history the natural gift of the historian stood him in good stead. It is perhaps not too much to say that, if M. Thiers had sat down in a library, or even in a record office, to write a history of the reign of Louis XIV., he would not have produced a specially valuable or remarkable work. His documents were the living actors of the scenes which he describes; his art was to take down the narrative of events from the mouth of those who had helped to create them, and to divine the motives and principles of action from the characters of those with whom he was thus brought in contact. Saved from the disadvantage of having himself witnessed or formed part of the Revolution, he yet derived an indispensable aid from his personal intercourse with the survivors of the revolutionary period. Excelling in the art of conversation, he knew how to

extract the materials which he required from men who unsuspectingly revealed themselves to his penetrating mind. He had scarcely a book to which he could go for his facts, for his documents, for the hundred and one suggestions and indications which the books of one's predecessors naturally afford to a skilful literary man. If he had the newspapers and the written records of the Assembly, the Convention, the Directory, the Municipality, I do not believe that he made a very exhaustive study of these; and certainly with these alone he could never have produced his work. Admirably systematic from beginning to end, profoundly thought out and lucidly explained, full of perspicacity, of movement, of life, of elevation —no mere dry record, but a brilliant exposition of motives, of underlying theories and principles—the *History of the French Revolution* is a luminous and elegant contribution to historical literature. Having said so much, let me add that it is not in the very highest order of history. No partisan can be a historian in the most lofty sense of all. The ideal historian may be fervid and even impassioned on behalf of certain general principles of human belief and action, but he must not be a partisan in respect of the events which he undertakes to narrate. Or, at least, if he be so by conviction and predilection, he must be of such a cold and phlegmatic temperament, of such supreme calmness of judgment and self-command, of such rare power in placing himself and holding himself outside his natural preoccupations, that he can deal with every crisis, every art, every individual, in a spirit of the most complete and uncompromising indifference. M. Thiers was at the commencement of his career almost, but not altogether, such a man. He instinctively inclined to the democratic view; he thoroughly believed in the wisdom and efficacy of the ideas of 1789, and he could not conceal the fact from his readers. Therefore his history is written with the tone of a man who has his plan carefully laid down from the first, and

who aims rather at registering and vindicating the decrees of fate than at setting forth facts and then inquiring into their causes and effects.

When by a decree of Charles X. and his ministers, dated 25th July 1830, the liberty of the press was suspended, and every paper in France required an authorisation to appear, the journalists of Paris in a body protested against the tyrannous order, and signed a formal document refusing their obedience. "The Government," it concluded, "has to-day lost the character of legality which commands obedience. We resist it for our own part; it is for France to judge how far its own resistance ought to go." Amongst the signatures are those of Thiers and Mignet, described as editors of the *National*, and that of C. de Rémusat, editor of the *Globe*. When the fall of Charles X. was seen to be inevitable; when, indeed, blood had already been shed, and the king had fled from Paris, Thiers, Mignet, and Larréguy concocted at the house of Laffitte a plan whereby a member of the family of Orleans should be summoned to the throne; and this plan, in spite of the opposition of many of the popular leaders, was eventually carried out. The conduct of M. Thiers throughout this crisis was bold and resolute. He had his reward in being elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies for Aix, and about two years afterwards was appointed Minister of the Interior. For some years to come he gave himself up to politics, and his pen was comparatively idle. It was not until 1845 that he began his *History of the Consulate and the Empire*, and the laborious work was only completed twenty years later. Simple in style, more clear than concise, not making too many remarks, Thiers makes his readers see and understand everything. He describes battles like a military man, and delineates the financial and exterior situation of France in a masterly manner. He writes history not from a picturesque or philosophical point of view, but as

a statesman. Let a single extract suffice to show how he contrives to make his personages stand out from the canvas :—

"The arts have depicted Bonaparte bounding over the Alpine snows upon a spirited horse : here is the simple truth. He went over the Saint-Bernard mounted on a mule, clad in that gray cloak which he always wore, led by a guide belonging to the country, showing in the difficult passes the abstraction of a mind occupied with something else, conversing with the officers scattered on the route, and now and then asking questions from the man who accompanied him, making him relate his life, his pleasures, his troubles, like an idle traveller who has nothing better to do. This guide, who was quite young, told him in an artless manner the details of his humble life, and above all the grief he felt in not being able to marry one of the maidens of the valley for want of means. The First Consul, sometimes listening to him, sometimes questioning the passers-by, who crowded in the mountain, reached the Convent, where the good monks received him cordially. Scarcely had he dismounted, when he wrote a note which he gave to his guide, recommending him to give it only to the administrator of the army, who was on the other side of the Saint-Bernard. In the evening, the young man, who had returned to Saint-Pierre, was surprised to learn to what a mighty traveller he had shown the way in the morning, and knew that General Bonaparte had ordered that a field, a house, in short, the means of getting married, should be given to him, so that he might realise all the dreams of his modest ambition. This mountaineer died in our time, in his own country, proprietor of the field which the ruler of the world had given him. This irregular act of benevolence, during a moment of such great preoccupation, is worthy of attention. If it be only a pure caprice of a conqueror, scattering at random good or evil, in turns overthrowing empires or building up a cottage, such caprices deserve to be mentioned, were it only to tempt the masters of the earth ; but such an act shows another thing. The human soul, in these moments when it is assailed by fierce desires,

is inclined to kindness; it does a kindness so as to deserve the one for which it entreats Providence."[1]

The remainder of the active and eventful life of M. Thiers, which reached its zenith of power and fame in 1871, is matter of contemporary history, whereof the last chapter has yet to be written.

François Mignet,[2] whose public life was closely interwoven with that of his fellow-student, was born at Aix, from whence he removed to Paris at the age of twenty-seven. He also wrote a *History of the French Revolution*, which appeared in 1824, and was received with a favour due to qualities distinct from those of his friend. Thiers and Mignet, although they had selected the same subject for the work on which they

[1] "Les arts l'ont dépeint franchissant les neiges des Alpes sur un cheval fougueux; voici la simple vérité. Il gravit le Saint-Bernard monté sur un mulet, revêtu de cette enveloppe grise qu'il a toujours portée, conduit par un guide du pays, montrant dans les passages difficiles la distraction d'un esprit occupé ailleurs, entretenant les officiers répandus sur la route, et puis, par intervalles, interrogeant le conducteur qui l'accompagnait, le faisant conter sa vie, ses plaisirs, ses peines, comme un voyageur oisif qui n'a pas mieux à faire. Ce conducteur, qui était tout jeune, lui exposa naïvement les particularités de son obscure existence, et surtout le chagrin qu'il éprouvait de ne pouvoir, faute d'un peu d'aisance, épouser l'une des filles de cette vallée. Le Premier Consul, tantôt l'écoutant, tantôt questionnant les passants dont la montagne était remplie, parvint à l'hospice, où les bons religieux le reçurent avec empressement. A peine descendu de sa monture, il écrivit un billet qu'il confia à son guide, en lui recommandant de le remettre exactement à l'administrateur de l'armée, resté de l'autre côté du Saint-Bernard. Le soir, le jeune homme, retourné à Saint-Pierre, apprit avec surprise quel puissant voyageur il avait conduit le matin, et sut que le général Bonaparte lui faisait donner un champ, une maison, les moyens de se marier enfin, et de réaliser tous les rêves de sa modeste ambition. Ce montagnard vient de mourir de nos jours, dans son pays, propriétaire du champ que le dominateur du monde lui avait donné. Cet acte singulier de bienfaisance, dans un moment de si grande préoccupation, est digne d'attention. Si ce n'est là qu'un pur caprice de conquérant, jetant au hasard le bien ou le mal, tour à tour renversant les empires ou édifiant une chaumière, de tels caprices sont bons à citer, ne serait-ce que pour tenter les maîtres de la terre; mais un pareil acte révèle autre chose. L'âme humaine, dans ces moments où elle éprouve des désirs ardents, est portée à la bonté: elle fait le bien comme une manière de mériter celui qu'elle sollicite de la Providence."

[2] 1796.

elected to build their fame, were rivals neither in desire nor in fact. Their histories are complementary one to the other; and he who would have a true conception of the epoch of which they treat must read their books side by side. There was a sort of division of labour between them. As a well-known literary critic[1] says: "M. Thiers had given the analysis of this epoch, M. Mignet gave its synthesis. When M. Thiers describes, M. Mignet summarises. When M. Thiers relates, M. Mignet reasons. When the one paints, the other calculates. M. Thiers had written the drama of the Revolution; M. Mignet wrote its metaphysics. Never was seen in a more striking manner the influence of diversity of mind upon the mode of studying a subject, even when the opinions are identical. This diversity is discovered even in the involuntary preferences displayed by the two historians. M. Thiers inclines always towards men of action; Mirabeau, Danton, Barras, Bonaparte. M. Mignet has a marked preference for thinkers; Siéyès is his man." The historical plan which one notices in the history of M. Thiers is yet more conspicuous in M. Mignet. The latter writes distinctly and professedly upon preconceived and foregone conclusions. He is the bold advocate of the Revolutionary idea; he sets out with the assumption that a pacific reform of the French constitution was impossible, and that, consequently, all the errors and crimes of 1789 until 1795 were but faults of degree, and not of principle. The contention may be just; I am not discussing politics, but history. It is in the nature of things hardly possible that any history of the French Revolution beyond the barest record of facts should be written from a point of view neither monarchical nor republican, but theoretically impartial. At all events that history has not been written; and least of all was it written by Mignet. Apart from this, Mignet's work is

[1] Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. ii. p. 139.

systematic, careful in its details, logical and elegant in style. That it is just and moderate in its general tone, let the following brief extract bear witness as a sample :—

"Thus fell the party of the Gironde, a party illustrious by great talents and great courage, a party which did honour to the young Republic by the horror of bloodshed, the hatred of crime, the disgust at anarchy, the love of order, of justice, and of liberty; a party awkwardly placed between the middle class whose reaction it had combated, and the multitude whose rule it repudiated. Condemned to inaction, this party could but illuminate a certain defeat by a courageous struggle and by an honourable death. At this period its end could be foreseen with certainty: it had been driven from post to post; from the Jacobins by the invasion of the Mountain; from the Commune by the relapse of Pétion; from the ministry by the retreat of Roland and his colleagues; from the army by the defection of Dumouriez. There remained for it only the Convention; it was here that it entrenched itself, that it struggled and succumbed. Its enemies, one after another, entered into plots and revolts against it. The plots gave rise to the Committee of Twelve, which seemed to give a momentary advantage to the Gironde, but which only more violently excited its adversaries. These set the people in motion, and they deprived the Girondins, first of their authority by suppressing the Twelve, and then of their political existence by proscribing their leaders."[1]

[1] "Ainsi succomba le parti de la Gironde, parti illustre par de grands talents et de grands courages, parti qui honora la république naissante par l'horreur du sang, la haine du crime, le dégoût de l'anarchie, l'amour de l'ordre, de la justice et de la liberté; parti mal placé entre la classe moyenne dont il avait combattu la révolution, et la multitude dont il repoussait le gouvernement. Condamné à ne pas agir, ce parti ne put qu'illustrer une défaite certaine par une lutte courageuse et par une belle mort. A cette époque, on pouvait avec certitude prévoir sa fin : il avait été chassé de poste en poste : des Jacobins, par l'envahissement des montagnards; de la commune, par la sortie de Pétion; du ministère, par la retraite de Roland et de ses collègues; de l'armée, par la défection de Dumouriez. Il ne lui restait plus que la convention; c'est là qu'il se retrancha, qu'il combattit et qu'il succomba. Ses ennemis essayèrent tour à tour contre lui et des complots et des insurrections. Les complots firent créer la commission des Douze, qui parut donner un avantage momentané

Mignet published between 1836 and 1842 a volume on the *Negotiations relating to the Spanish Succession;* in 1845 a *History of Antonio Perez and Philip II.;* and in 1851 a *History of Mary Stuart;* in all of which he displayed the same systematic skill and the same sobriety and vigour of style; so much so as to have earned for himself the title of the French Sallust.[1] He was elected in 1836 a member of the French Academy, wherein his friend, M. Thiers, had preceded him by three years; and he was in addition the perpetual secretary of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

An older man than either Thiers or Mignet, equally if not more distinguished as a historian, though he did not make his *debut* in this branch of literature until they were already famous, François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot,[2] came up to Paris from his native town of Nîmes in 1805. He was chosen one of the professors in the Faculty of Letters; the chair of history being committed to his charge, although he had hardly then written anything else but a *Dictionary of Synonyms.* Guizot, like Royer-Collard and many other men of the moderate monarchical school, looked upon the Empire with distrust, and certainly never sought employment or honour from Napoleon, or from the great dispenser of his civil patronage, Fontanes. But when the latter, at the end of 1812, offered him a professorship in the Normal School, Guizot did not refuse it. That, however, was the extent of his compliance. Fontanes reminded him that it had become a practice for a newly-appointed professor to deliver a speech in praise of the Emperor, and for a copy of this speech to be placed over night upon Napoleon's table. "I shall not do it,"

à la Gironde, mais qui n'en excita que plus violemment ses adversaires. Ceux-ci mirent le peuple en mouvement, et ils enlevèrent aux Girondins, d abord leur autorité en détruisant les Douze, ensuite leur existence politique en proscrivant leurs chefs."

[1] Saint-René Taillandier. [2] 1787-1874.

Guizot replied promptly. "Take back the chair that you gave me. I do not love the Emperor, and I will not praise him." "You will get me into new trouble," sighed Fontanes; but he did not press the point. Guizot delivered his first lecture without a word of the accustomed flattery. It was never known whether Napoleon read his printed copy or not; but, at any rate, Guizot was left undisturbed in the possession of his chair.

The life of Guizot, like the life of Thiers, was constantly divided between the claims of literature and the distraction of public affairs. From the moment of Napoleon's retirement to Elba, Guizot seems to have been smitten with a desire for political activity, and in the month of May 1815 he paid a visit to Louis XVIII. at Ghent. He was rewarded by being appointed secretary-general at the Ministry of Justice, under Pasquier, and this and other offices he held until 1820, when, in company with Royer-Collard, Jordan, and Barante, he was removed from the Council of State by the duke de Richelieu, the minister of an ultra-monarchical reaction. It was shortly after this six years' episode of politics that Guizot was appointed professor of history at the Sorbonne; and in an interesting page of his *Memoirs* he has left us a picture of the audience before whom he opened his course on the 7th of December 1820. Students[1] of the various higher schools of Paris were mingled with older men affected by the prevailing attachment to historical studies. The first were for the most part a legacy from Guizot's predecessors; the last were for the most part rooted in the prejudices which they had derived from the eighteenth century. Amongst the first were many ardent Liberals of an advanced order, already engaged in the intrigues which penetrated Parisian society during the ministry of Villèle, and who found the moderate opposition

[1] A Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. ii. book vi. chap. 3.

of the lecturer too cold to satisfy them. Amongst the latter were many who looked with distrust upon the comparatively young man who had not yet secured the personal authority which was soon to add sufficient warrant to his novel historical philosophy. It was a difficult soil to cultivate; but Guizot neither despaired nor failed. He resolved to avoid the recent annals of France, and to carry his hearers back to the lessons of the old *régime*. "I made up my mind," he says, "to re-introduce old France to the memory and the understanding of the new generations." And it was not long before his evident sincerity, his sober style and manner, his philosophical views, his commanding figure and strikingly intellectual face, impressed these rising generations with a sense of his power, and exerted their due authority over the minds of his audiences. Not by any means that he neglected the invaluable lessons of the late Revolution. The umbrage which he gave to the Government, in spite of his moderation, may be understood when we recall a single brief passage from his treatise on *The Government of France since the Restoration*. "For more than thirteen centuries," he wrote, "France contained two peoples; for thirteen centuries the conquered people struggled to cast off the yoke of the victorious people. Our history is the history of this long struggle. In our own days a decisive battle has been fought: it is called the Revolution."

It was upon the suspension of his lectures in October, 1822, that Guizot began to edit the *Memoirs on the History of the English Revolution*, in twenty-six volumes, and *Memoirs relating to the Ancient History of France*, in thirty-one volumes; and, debarred from the lecture-room, he had recourse to the press, wrote articles in the *Globe*, and founded a review, the *Revue Française*, of which a number appeared every two months, and which had a great influence on public opinion. It was not until the year 1827 that he

published his first *Course of Modern History;* but it is not to be supposed that his pen was idle during this portion of his life. His *History of the English Revolution* occupied him for many years before his publication in 1826; and amongst the other fruits of a laborious life may be mentioned his *Essay on the History of France*, which was published in 1824. In 1828 the Sorbonne was reopened; and Guizot's second and third course of lectures was delivered on the History of Civilisation in Europe, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution; a course which may perhaps be regarded as the most significant monument of the genius of its author. Here, at last, Guizot showed himself, beyond further doubt, as the greatest French historian of his time; far superior in scope and philosophical power to any of his contemporaries. He was, in fact, the founder of a philosophical school of history; a school in which he has had distinguished disciples, but not one of them—or perhaps I had better say only one of them[1]—as great as his master. In the works of Thiers, Louis Blanc, and Mignet, there are but the rudiments of philosophy, the germs of large ideas and generalisations which are nowhere thoroughly evolved. But Guizot's scope is always broad; his generalisations are always lucid and striking. It was to his courage in being true to himself, and in refusing to contract his ideas to the limits of a subject which might have won him an earlier popularity, that he owes the legitimate triumph of his faculties; and a triumph so deserved and so won is precisely what we recognise under the name of genius.

The great advantage possessed by historians of the school of Thiers and Mignet over historians of the school of Guizot is this: that the former, by their succinct and systematic narratives, produce works more generally useful, and therefore more generally satisfactory. Readers of Guizot and Michelet must be on a higher level of thought in order to en-

[1] Michelet.

joy and profit by what they read, must already know the facts of the epoch under consideration, and be in a condition to receive and appreciate simple deductions and theories; must, in short, not look for information in the first place, but for suggestions and ideas. Readers of Thiers, Louis Blanc, Mignet, may be breakers of new ground, seeking instruction in what has been, rather than lessons upon what ought to have been and might have been. This distinction once observed, I may add that Thiers and Guizot, in their respective classes, approach nearest to each other by their respective manners of treatment. The method of the latter has been well described by a brother historian, Augustin Thierry, who bears generous testimony to the value of Guizot's most important work. "It is a work," he says,[1] "the most extensive which has yet been performed in connection with the sources, the basis, and the issue of the history of France. Six volumes of critical history, three courses of lectures delivered with great success, constitute this work, whereof the aggregate is truly imposing. The *Essays on the History of France*, the *History of Civilisation in Europe*, and the *History of Civilisation in France*, are three parts of the same whole, three successive phases of the same labour, continued for ten years. Each time when the author resumed his subject—the revolutions of society in Gaul from the decline of the Roman Empire—he displayed greater depths of analysis, more loftiness and solidity in his views. Whilst pursuing the course of his personal discoveries, he has constantly kept his eyes open to the scientific opinions evolved around him, and, grasping them, modifying them, giving them more precision and scope, he has combined them with his own by an admirable eclecticism. His labours have thus become the most solid basis, the most faithful mirror, of modern historical science, in its most certain and invariable aspects. He has inaugurated, as the

[1] *Récits des temps Mérovingiens*, ch. iv.

historian of our ancient institutions, the era of science properly so called; before him, with the single exception of Montesquieu, there were nothing but systems."

Let the reader judge for himself by the following extract —if it is possible to judge by an extract—whether this praise be deserved :—

"Is it not indeed clear that civilisation is the great fact in which all others merge; in which they extend, in which they are all condensed, in which all others find their importance? Take all the facts of which the history of a nation is composed, all the facts which we are accustomed to consider as the elements of its existence—take its institutions, its commerce, its industry, its wars, the various details of its government; and if you would form some idea of them as a whole, if you would see their various bearings on each other, if you would appreciate their value, if you would pass a judgment upon them, what is it you desire to know? Why, what they have done to forward the progress of civilisation, what part they have acted in this great drama—what influence they have exercised in aiding its advance. It is not only by this that we form a general opinion of these facts, but it is by this standard that we try them, that we estimate their true value. These are, as it were, the rivers of whom we ask how much water they have carried to the ocean. Civilisation is, as it were, the grand emporium of a people, in which rolls its wealth, wherein all the elements of its life, all the powers of its existence, are stored up. It is so true that we judge of minor facts accordingly as they affect this greater one, that even some which are naturally detested and hated, which prove a heavy calamity to the nation upon which they fall—say for instance despotism, anarchy, and so forth—even these are partly forgiven, their evil nature is partly overlooked, if they have aided in any considerable degree the march of civilisation. Wherever the progress of this principle is visible, together with the facts which have urged it forward, we are tempted to forget the price it has cost—we overlook the dearness of the purchase."[1]

[1] Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*, chap. i.

In the Revolution of 1830 Guizot took a part rather distinguished than active. He was a member of the provisional ministry of July, of which Dupont de Nemours was the president. Guizot undertook the portfolio of public instruction, and there were not wanting those who expressed an ironical surprise at this selection, and who contrasted the Guizot of 1815 with the Guizot of 1830. Amongst his critics in this sense was M. Louis Blanc, whose words, taken from his *History of Ten Years*, I will quote as much for an illustration of the style of the writer as for the graphic sketch which they convey of Guizot himself:—

"By his noble but sad face, by his clear-cut lip, by his smile full of cold disdain, by a certain feebleness of body, revealing the unquiet of his soul, it was easy to recognise him. We have seen him, since then, in the Assemblies; one could distinguish at a distance, amongst all the rest, his bilious and enfeebled appearance. When provoked by his adversaries, he fixed upon them the look of one who was ready to convey an insult, and raised his head to the height of his bowed figure with an inexpressible air of anger and irony. A Protestant and a professor, his peremptory gesture, his dogmatic tone, lent him an indomitable appearance. Nevertheless his firmness was entirely in outward show; in reality, his was a spirit without activity, and his will lacked vigour. The very sequence which was observable in the writings of M. Guizot was due to the obstinacy of a master who will not contradict himself before his pupils. He was considered to be cruel; he was so probably in his discourses alone; but by a refinement of pride he liked to compromise himself; and he who willingly suffered his virtues to lie concealed had seeming vices. . . . His talent consisted in dissimulating, under solemnity of expression and the pomp of formulas, an extreme poverty of views and sentiments, devoid of grandeur. Nevertheless his word had weight, and his disinterestedness, the sobriety of his life, his domestic virtues, the austerity of his manners, made him conspicuous amidst a frivolous and a grasping society." [1]

[1] L. Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, 1830-1840, vol. i. p. 365.

The picture is doubtless more or less overdrawn and prejudiced; but, even so, how clearly it brings the man himself before us! And at any rate, remembering how characteristic of French literature are the portraits which men of letters have drawn of themselves or of each other, I could not feel justified in omitting one of the most remarkable of them all.

The affair of the Spanish marriages and the political life of M. Guizot, as a minister of State, an ambassador to England, a president of the Council, have no claim to be discussed in a history of literature.

In 1841 Guizot wrote a sketch of Washington, which is not to be compared with the best of his literary productions, although it is held in considerable esteem on the other side of the Atlantic. At the age of eighty-five he brought out a résumé of no great pretension, called a *History of France related to my Grandchildren*, of which the last volume appeared after his death. Guizot was elected to the Academy in 1836, and was at the same time a member of the Academies of Inscriptions and of Moral and Political Sciences.

Jules Michelet[1] was one of the earliest and the most distinguished of the historical school, which, professedly or instinctively, adopted the philosophical method of Guizot, and which, not satisfied with the mere recital of facts, however complete the system upon which it might be possible to arrange them, sought in history its more lofty tendencies, its more pregnant lessons, its more brilliant adornments. Born at Paris a year after Thiers, two years after Mignet, he devoted himself from his youth to the study which was to occupy him throughout his long life, making his first attempts on public favour in his *Chronological Tableau of Modern History* and his *Synchronic Tableau of Modern History*.[2] In 1830 he was appointed to superintend the historical section

[1] 1798-1874. [2] Published in 1825 and 1826.

of the national archives, a position which enabled him to pursue under the most favourable circumstances the researches upon which his more important works were founded. In the following year appeared his *Roman History.* In 1833 he published a *Précis of Modern History;* and in the same year he began his voluminous *History of France,* which consumed the best labours of four-and-twenty years, while a *History of the French Revolution* alone took him six years.[1] The *Sources of French Law* was issued in 1837; he also wrote a volume of the *Memoirs of Luther,* and translated the *Principles of the Philosophy of History* from *la Scienza Nuova* of Vico. His principal work, *The History of France,* has not been concluded; and several volumes of it appeared after his death. He also devoted himself for two or three years to natural history, and wrote treatises of no little originality on *Birds, Insects, The Sea,* and many other heterogeneous subjects.

The style of Michelet is sparkling, full of breadth and vigour, of fire and originality. The richness of the thoughts seems to clog the pen of the writer, so that his language becomes nervous and even turgid; but the brightness of his pictures, the abundance of his ideas, charm the reader more than any mere evenness and elegance of form. "He does not simply search for the ideas that underline facts; he describes facts, but he surrounds them with a sort of mystic transfiguration; facts, in his narrative, are converted into symbols, events become ideas which move and contend against each other."[2]

We have already quoted Michelet often in the course of this History of French Literature; let us give as one more specimen of his writing the following passage:—

"Louis the Twelfth was a good man, naturally honest, sometimes ridiculous, indiscreet, gossipy, choleric; but he had a heart;

[1] 1847-1853. [2] Saint-René Taillandier.

and the only way to flatter him was to persuade him that you desired the welfare of his subjects. That very cunning courtier, Amboise, under a very heavy outward appearance, gained over the king, and kept his favour, by making much of his reductions of taxes, an economy of halfpence or farthings, whilst he saved money for himself, or cast away millions in his papal intrigue. I do not at all believe what the panegyrist Leyssel says, that in the midst of such a great war, it was possible to reduce the taxes by a third. Besides, who knew it? What publicity existed there at that time? What authentic calculations? What is certain is, that Louis XII., as long as he could do so, made Italy herself pay for the war in Italy, resolved to drain her in order to save France. The army was fed, was paid, as it best might be, by the enemy, and even by the ally. It was, as we have seen from 1806 to 1812, the epoch of the *military chest*, a system which renders the war less burdensome to the nation which carries it on, but which heaps up against it mountains of hatred, and prepares for it cruel reprisals in the day of reverses.[1] France felt the wars of Louis XII. little. It was very sincere in its gratitude for him. There was a real enthusiasm, there were real tears shed, when, during the sitting of the States at Tours, they saw him pale, tottering, scarcely cured of his illness, tearing up the treaty which would have given France to the foreigner, and saluted him as *Father of the people.* They were thankful to him for three things, all three real: for having reduced the taxes, for having repressed the pillage of the men of war, for having reformed the judges."[2]

[1] Michelet's *Renaissance* appeared in 1855, and this phrase seems prophetic. Napoleon I. made Germany also pay for the wars he carried on against it; and his nephew, or rather France, has experienced the truth of Michelet's shrewd remark.

[2] Louis XII. était un bon homme, naturellement honnête, ridicule parfois, indiscret, bavard, colérique; mais il avoit du coeur; et la seule manière de le flatter, c'était de lui persuader qu'on voulait le bien des sujets. Le très-fin courtisan Amboise, sous une grosse enveloppe gagna le roi et le garda, en lui faisant valoir ses réductions d'impôts, telle économie de sous ou de deniers, pendant qu'il amassait pour lui, ou jetait des millions dans son affaire do papauté. Je ne crois point du tout ce que dit le panégyriste Leyssel, qu'on ait pu réduire les impôts du tiers, au milieu d'une si grande guerre. Qui le savait d'ailleurs? Quelle publicité y-a-vait-il alors? Quels chiffres authentiques? Ce

Augustin Thierry[1] falls not far short of the genius of Guizot and Michelet ; and indeed, in his style, as in his historical scope, he occupies an intermediate position between these two—approaching both at their best, excelling both in certain of his own higher qualities, and yet without the special strength which has earned for them their highest fame. Born at Blois, he was one of the first students in the Normal School founded under the Empire in 1811. After a specially distinguished course at college and university, he gave himself entirely to historical pursuits from the age of twenty ; and ten years of arduous and unremitting toil resulted in the complete loss of eyesight in 1826. One of his best-known works, the *History of the Norman Conquest in England*, had appeared in the preceding year ; whilst in the year following he gave to the world his *Letters on French History*. His affliction seemed only to nerve him to greater efforts. *Ten Years of Historical Studies* appeared in 1840 ; *Narratives of the Merovingian Times* six years later ; a *Collection of the Monuments of the History of the Third-Estate* (of which the first volume appeared in 1849, the other two later) ; and an *Essay on the Rise and Progress of the Third-Estate*, in 1853. The *Collection* occupied him during seven years, and was only brought to a close by his death in 1856. We may judge of the spirit with which Thierry pursued his labours by a noble and pathetic

qui est sur, cest que, Louis XII., tant qu'il put, fit-payer la guerre d'Italie par l'Italie elle même, décidé à l'épuiser pour ménager la France. L'armée se nourrit, se solda, comme elle put, sur l'ennemi, et sur l'allié même. Ce fut ce qu'on a vu de 1806 à 1812, l'époque du *trésor de l'armée*. Système qui rend la guerre plus lègere à la nation guerroyante, sauf à entasser contre elle des montagnes de haine, et qui prépare de cruelles represailles pour le jour des revers. La France sentit peu les guerres de Louis XII. Elle fut très-sincère dans sa reconnaissance pour lui. Il y eut véritable enthousiasme et des larmes lorsqu'aux états de Tours, le voyant pâle, chancelant, à peine relevé de maladie, et déchirant le traité qui eut donné la France à l'étranger, on le salua le *Père du peuple*. On le remercia pour trois choses, vraies toutes trois : d'avoir réduit l'impôt, réprimé les pillages des gens de guerre, réformé les juges."—*Histoire de France, Renaissance*, ch. xi.

[1] 1795-1856.

self-allusion, which he did not hesitate to insert in the preface of his *Ten Years of Historical Studies:* "Blind and suffering, without hope and almost without respite, I can bear this testimony which, coming from me, will not be suspected. There is in the world something better than material enjoyments, better than fortune, better even than health, and that is devotion to science." The science which Thierry cherished was of the severest order, based on rationalism pure and simple. The ideas of 1789 were to him the only satisfactory starting-point for the politics of the future, and he was impatient of all restraint or compromise which prevented their universal application. In the first years of the Restoration he was associated with Cousin and Dunoyer in the conduct of the *European Censor.* "I had," he himself tells us, "an aversion to the military *régime*, added to a hatred of the aristocratic pretensions of the Restoration, without any special revolutionary tendency. I looked forward with enthusiasm to a future, I hardly knew what, to a liberty whereof the formula, if I gave it one, was this: a government, be it what it might, with the greatest possible number of individual guarantees, and the least possible amount of administrative action." The same ardent, if somewhat vague aspirations, distinguish his writings. With the exception of Louis Blanc, he was perhaps the most complete Liberal historian of his time.

Louis Blanc,[1] from whose *History of Ten Years* I have already made a quotation, was born at Madrid of French parents. After having written for four years in the Liberal newspaper *Le Bon Sens*, he founded in 1839 *The Review of Progress*, and published the year following his well-known treatise on the *Organisation of Labour.* The year after that appeared *The History of Ten Years*, an exhaustive account of the revolution which set Louis Philippe upon the throne, and of the popular agitations and diplomatic intrigues which flowed

[1] 1813.

out of this revolution as their source. It is a work of much erudition and of unstinted labour, well planned and well thought out, missing little that is important in the attainment of a clear idea of the period under treatment, and illustrated by numerous confirmatory documents. It is, in fact, conceived in the highest style of simply narrative history; but it is the work of a democrat professing the most uncompromising form of socialism, and carrying the deduction from his adopted principles to its farthest logical conclusions. Louis Blanc unquestionably aims at the strictest impartiality, and in great measure he attains it; but he seldom resists a sneer at the "general-dukes," the "hero-barons," the "great-men-princes" of Napoleon, or at the diplomatists and courtiers of the Restoration. In his preface he writes :—

"Before taking up my pen, I questioned myself severely; and, as I could discover within me neither interested affections nor implacable hatreds, I thought that I should be able to judge men and things without failing in justice and without betraying the truth."

We may well doubt his freedom from implacable hatreds, at all events from the point of view of the historical critic. Nevertheless, Louis Blanc is a genuine historian, with whom history is always the first and most sacred concern, even when his opinions are warped by the vehemence of his party-feeling. His first words forewarn us of what we are naturally to expect :—

"The cause of the noble, the rich, the happy, is not the cause which I serve. I belong by conviction to a party which has committed faults, cruelly expiated; but I entered this party only on the morrow of its last defeat."

And again, in his introduction :—

"I shall confine myself to showing that the fall of the Empire and the accession of Louis XVIII. were in the interest, and were

the work, of the *bourgeoisie;* and that all the political movements of the Restoration sprang from the efforts of the *bourgeoisie* to subject royalty without destroying it."

And, lest he should still be supposed capable of flattering a hated class by the recital of its triumphs, he adds a note :—

"By *bourgeoisie* I mean the aggregate of citizens who, possessing instruments of labour or capital, work with the resources proper to them, and only in a partial manner depend upon others. The *people* is the aggregate of citizens who, possessing no capital, depend on others completely, and in respect of the first necessities of existence."

To the latter class he professes himself to belong; and it is as its champion that, whether he desires it or no, his readers cannot avoid regarding him.

The following passage, an account of the situation of Paris on the 28th of July 1830, may be taken as a fair specimen of the mingled precision, vigour, and animus of the *History of Ten Years:*—

"The soldiers had no provisions, and they would have been the first to be disarmed by hunger. Once again, for a servant of Charles X. there was no alternative between suffering the crown of this moribund old man to fall into the abyss and setting fire to the four quarters of his capital. For when a society submits to the rule of monarchs, it ought to know that it may cost so much as that to save itself! The troops, then, were set in motion, the cannon rolled along the streets, and civil war broke out in Paris. What was to be the issue of this war? Men of science, men of letters, almost all military men, began to pity the combatants and their folly. M. Thiers ran for refuge to the house of Madame de Courchamps, in the vale of Montmorency. In the offices of the *Globe* M. Cousin spoke of the white flag as the only one which the nation could recognise; and he reproached M. Pierre Leroux for compromising his friends by the revolutionary tone which he had made the journal assume. The principal editor of the *Globe*, M. Dubois, was absent. In short, everything

was agitation, uncertainty, confusion, in the ranks of the upper *bourgeoisie.*" [1]

Louis Blanc has also written a *History of the French Revolution* (1847), an enthralling subject for Frenchmen, which, in addition to himself, Thiers, Mignet, and Michelet, occupied the labours of Droz [2] and de Lamartine.[3] The latter, however, has received more credit for his *History of the Girondins* (1847), a topic eminently suited to his personal dispositions and predilections. Louis Blanc resided for nearly twenty years in England, an exile from his native land, and has often written during that time articles in English in a style of manly and spirited vigour. He sent also from hence *Letters on England* to the Liberal newspaper *Le Temps*, which show calm judgment, an unbiassed mind, and a true spirit of observation.

I can do no more than mention the remaining historians of this period: Henri Martin,[4] the writer of a remarkably full and trustworthy *History of France*, in seventeen bulky volumes, invaluable to the student, and which has often been put under contribution for this History of French Literature; Amédée Thierry,[5] author of a *History of the Gauls;* de

[1] Mais les soldats manquaient de vivres, et ils avaient été les premiers désarmés par la faim. Encore une fois, pour un serviteur de Charles X. il n'y avait pas de milieu entre laisser tomber dans l'abîme la couronne de ce vieillard moribond et mettre le feu aux quatre coins de sa capitale. Car il faut bien qu'une société sache, quand elle se soumet au régime des monarchies, qu'il peut en coûter cela pour les sauver! Les troupes se mirent donc en mouvement; les canons roulèrent sur le pavé, et la guerre civile éclata dans Paris. Quelle allait être l'issue de cette guerre? Les savants, les hommes de lettres, presque tous les militaires, prirent en pitié les combattants et leur folie. M. Thiers courut chercher un refuge chez Mme de Courchamp, dans la vallée de Montmorency. Dans les bureaux du *Globe*, M. Cousin parlait du drapeau blanc comme du seul drapeau que la nation pût reconnaître; et il reprochait à M. Pierre Leroux de compromettre ses amis par l'allure révolutionnaire qu'il faisait prendre au journal. Le rédacteur en chef du *Globe*, M. Dubois, se trouvait absent. Enfin, tout n'était que troubles, incertitudes, confusion, dans les rangs de la haute bourgeoisie.—Vol. i. ch. iv.

[2] 1773-1850. [3] 1790-1869. [4] 1810. [5] 1797.

Vaulabelle,[1] author of a *History of the Two Restorations;* Duruy,[2] who confined himself to the history of Ancient Rome and Greece; Sainte-Beuve,[3] whom we shall encounter further on, but whose *History of Port-Royal* exacts for him a mention in the present chapter; and A de Tocqueville,[4] rather a philosopher than a historian, whose works on *Democracy in America* and *The Old Régime and the Revolution* must be classed amongst the most valuable historical monuments of the nineteenth century.

[1] 1799. [2] 1811. [3] 1804-1869. [4] 1805-1859.

CHAPTER II.

§ 1. Growth of the Romantic School.

The choice of the duke of Orléans, Louis Philippe de Bourbon, in succession to the deposed Charles X., altered the whole condition of government in France, for it was the choice of a prince of the blood-royal, who had long professed to be a Republican. He was himself the son of a regicide, that is to say, of a member of the Convention, "and," he said to Godefroi Cavaignac, one of a number of ardent Republicans whom the Prince had desired to meet, "I never knew a more respectable man."[1] I have nothing to do with the question of Louis Philippe's consistency in accepting the crown. The important thing to bear in mind is that his reign was incomparably more Liberal than that of his predecessor, not only from a political point of view, but on account of the increased freedom of the press. When, in his address to the inhabitants of Paris he declared that "the Charter should henceforth be a reality," he sincerely meant what he said; and he kept his word. The literary annals, therefore, of the reign of Louis Philippe contain few records of the suppression of freedom of speech, few of the suppression of journals; and the works which it remains for us to notice will be found to be permeated, not merely by a spirit of greater courage and fearlessness in respect of their expression, but also, and as a natural consequence, by greater loftiness of view and elegance of style.

[1] Louis Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. i. c. 7.

The songs of Béranger and Delavigne, as we have seen, were immensely popular during the earlier Restoration period. Both these poets belonged to the Opposition party, and both published their works under more or less restraint from the Government. In Béranger's case this restraint was pushed as far as persecution and imprisonment; and many of his later songs—previous to the year 1830—assumed, as we have seen, a hostile and even a political tone. The second revolution swept away this restraint; and poetry shared in the general emancipation. Its effect is perceptible not only in the increased outspokenness of those whom fear or caution had hitherto fettered in the free expression of their thoughts, but also in a distinct advance of power and brilliancy amongst the younger authors of the day. The poetic companionship which had supplied the contents of the *Muse Française* had been broken up by the ravages of time and of political changes; the magazine itself was defunct, and no similar one had taken its place. But, towards the close of the third decade of the century, the Romantic school of French poetry began to assert its irresistible claims to recognition and approval, and the legitimate heir of the neo-classical spirit was welcomed with enthusiasm. The magazine of the poets was succeeded by a poets' club, the *Cénacle*, of which Sainte-Beuve, himself a member, writes in these words[1]:—"Around M. Victor Hugo,[2] and in the freedom of a pleasant intimacy, a select band of new friends had been formed; two or three of the older ones had joined it. The evenings were passed in company; the verses which had been written were recited. . . The genuine middle-age was studied, appreciated in its architecture, in its chronicles, in its picturesque vividness; there was a sculptor, a painter, amongst these poets, and Hugo, who in chiselling and in colour rivalled both artists." No doubt the romanticism of the *Cénacle* was too pronounced, too

[1] *Critiques et Portraits*, vol. i. p. 363.

[2] 1802.

subject to exaggeration; but no less exaggerated was the spite which the champions of the older classical forms displayed towards the innovators. The battle was waged in the newspapers; in the drawing-room it made the plot of a dialogue by Baour-Lormian,[1] *The Classical and the Romantic*, wherein he fought valiantly for the older school. The ephemeral success of this piece incited him to the production of the *Alarm Gun*, a satire, in which he makes the most heroic efforts to crush the new generation of poets.[2] Lemercier, too, whom some one had accused of the paternity of the new school, strenuously repudiated the idea in his *Cain, a Melodramatic Parody, preceded by a prologue and a pot-pourri-preface*, in one line whereof he exclaims with indignation, "Avec impunité les Hugo font des vers!" To such a length was the battle carried, that in 1829 seven wise men of Paris, amongst whom was the author of the *Alarm Gun*, with Arnault and Etienne, petitioned the king to exclude the pest of romanticism from the Théâtre Français; whereupon Charles X. very sensibly replied that, when poetry was in question, he had only a place in the pit.

The part which Victor Hugo took in this literary controversy was that of a recognised leader, and the prefaces to his earlier works—to his plays in particular—contain the principles of the school, together with their vindication. The preface to *Cromwell* (1827) is a studied "defence and illustration" of the new poetic theory; and indeed there is more than a superficial parallel between this essay of Hugo's and the work of Joachim du Bellay—between the *Cénacle* and the *Pléiade*.[3] Humanity, says Hugo, may be divided into

[1] 1770-1854.

[2] "Il semble que l'excès de leur stupide rage
A métamorphosé leurs traits et leur langage;
Il semble, à les ouïr grognant sur mon chemin,
Qu'ils ont vu de Circé la baguette en ma main."

[3] I am adopting the observation of M. Demogeot.

three grand phases, the primitive ages, antiquity, the modern ages; and the poetry corresponding to these phases adopts the characteristic forms of ode, epic, and drama. The poetry of modern ages, of the Christian epoch, is dramatic; the supreme ideal of modern poetry is character. As for the rules of the drama, we are not to be fettered by Aristotle; Hugo, like Goethe, recognises little more than the unity of action—the *ensemble*, *das Fassliche*. Hence followed, as a matter of course, a scathing criticism of the classical school, which would have been all the more forcible if Hugo's exaggerated realism had not placed so strong a weapon of defence in the hands of his victims, and generated something like a reaction in their favour even amongst his own disciples. After the abortive attempt of the seven wise men to enlist Charles X. in their cause, Hugo prepared a drama for the Théâtre Français, which in fact put his opponents to utter rout. *Hernani* was first acted in February 1830. Long before the representation began, every part of the theatre was crammed by artists, Bohemians, Romanticists of every shade, to the exclusion of the unfortunate partisans of the classical school, nicknamed *perruques*, periwigs, whom this quaint outcome of the new school was intended to astonish. The young Parisians, who had by this time begun to make Hugo their idol, took up the quarrel with enthusiasm; and they now formed a new club, *le Petit Cénacle*, which pushed to the point of ridicule the revolution commenced by its prototype.

§ 2. The Poets of the Romantic School.

Victor Hugo was the son of an old republican soldier who had rallied to the Empire, and of a legitimist mother, the daughter of a shipowner of Nantes. He was born at Besançon, where general Joseph-Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo

commanded the garrison. For seven years the boy travelled from place to place with his parents; but in 1809 Madame Hugo settled with her children at the convent of the Feuillantines, in Paris, whilst the father resided at Madrid as Master of the Royal Household. There, in 1811, the general's family joined him; but the incompatibility of political opinions, which had long existed between the parents of the poet, ended at last in open rupture; and shortly after the first Restoration General Hugo separated from his wife, and deprived her of the care of her children. The young Victor, throughout these eventful years, in which the lights and shadows of life had been indelibly impressed upon his plastic mind, had displayed a precocious talent, and, much against his father's will, spent every leisure moment in composing verses and romances. At the age of fourteen he wrote a drama, *Artamène,* to celebrate the accession of Louis XVIII., and in the following year he obtained an *accessit* for a poem on the *Advantages of Study,* in competition for a prize of the Academy.[1] It was not until 1819 that General Hugo consented that his son should pursue his natural bent; and the young poet now threw himself into his career with enthusiasm. His first efforts were made chiefly through the newspapers, where his vigour, his brilliancy, and the notable if not always sustained grandeur of his ideas at once attracted attention. He was, to begin with, very naturally a royalist, and he celebrated, in poems rivalling the *Messéniennes* of Delavigne, the sorrows and sufferings of the victims of the Revolution. One poem in particular, on the reception into heaven of Louis XVII., secured for him the special favour of the king and the monarchical party. At this crisis[2] a love affair

[1] It is said he would have received the prize, but for an allusion to his age—

"Moi qui, fuyant toujours les cités et les cours,
De trois lustres à peine ai vu finir le cours."

[2] When Victor Hugo was in his nineteenth year.

intervened, and did much to give to Victor Hugo, or at least to develope in him, the ultra-romanticism which has ever since been so prominent a characteristic of his mind. The lady's friends forbade her intercourse with Hugo. The latter, in the midst of his melancholy work, wrote two weird romances, *Bug-Jargal*, in which one of the heroes is a repellent negro, Habibrah; and *Han of Iceland*, which Sainte-Beuve, already on terms of intimacy with him, declares to have been an allegory, intended to be understood only by his *inamorata*. Han is a hideous ogre, living in the ruins of Arbar in the company of a congenial bear, and was drawn as a type of the obstacle to the lover's attachment. The lovers themselves are represented by Ethel, who falls into the ogre's power, and Ordener; and we can perceive already the dramatic strength, and the talent and fancy for depicting forcible contrasts, in the elaboration of this lucid idea.

In 1822 the obstacle was removed, chiefly by Hugo's literary success and increased income; and the marriage was permitted. The poet, encouraged by Chateaubriand and patronised by the court, had founded a literary *Conservateur*, which was fairly successful from a commercial point of view; and, moreover, Louis XVIII., about this time, did himself the honour to confer a pension on the poet. A friend and old schoolfellow of the latter's, Delon, had been condemned to death *in contumaciam* for his share in a conspiracy against the Government, and Hugo wrote to the mother, offering her son an asylum. "I am too much of a royalist," he said, "for them to think of seeking him in my rooms." The letter was opened in the post-office; the king saw it, and he gave the writer the next pension on the civil list that fell vacant. Hugo's fame spread quickly, and his friends increased. It was now that the literary *réunions* began, of which I have already spoken, and his little house in the Rue Vaugirard was frequented by men like de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, the two

Deschamps, Guiraud, and de Beauchesne. Amongst them they agreed that a fresh departure in poetry was absolutely required; and it was from the year 1824 that Victor Hugo began to enunciate his new ideas.

It was in the year 1828 that Victor Hugo produced a volume of poems, the *Orientales*, which fully illustrated in the lyric vein the principles which he had laid down and insisted upon. Politics, the poetry of melancholy, are here completely laid aside; in their place we have sparkling beauties of conception, of style, of colouring. It is for the first time the inspired poet whom we encounter; the poet who holds the hands of Byron and of Swinburne, who was in fact indebted to Byron as Swinburne was to be indebted—and was to boast of his indebtedness—to him. The same ardent spirit is manifested in his *Autumn Leaves*, published in 1831—a spirit which the poet has described in the latter volume, in verses which have all the elevation of an old Hebrew seer, carried away in the magnification of his own office.

"It is that glory, love, to live, to die,
Waves that unceasing follow waves that fly,
Each breath, each ray of light, or good or ill,
Cause my dear crystal soul to shine and thrill,
Soul, thousand-tongued soul, which God, whose praise I sing,
Midmost has placed to echo everything."[1]

To the novels and the dramas of Victor Hugo I shall have occasion to return. Amongst his poems, published subsequently to those already mentioned, are the *Songs of Twilight* (1835), *Rays and Shadows* (1840), *Inner Voices, The Chastisements* (1853), *Contemplations* (1856), *The Legend of*

[1] "C'est que l'amour, la tombe, et la gloire, et la vie,
L'onde qui fuit, par l'onde incessamment suivie,
Tout souffle, tout rayon, ou propice ou fatal,
Fait reluire et vibrer mon âme de cristal,
Mon âme aux mille voix, que le Dieu que j'adore,
Mit au centre de tout, comme un écho sonore."

Centuries (1859), of which the second part has just appeared, the *Song of the Streets and of the Woods* (1865), and *The Terrible Year* (1872).

Some of the works mark notable changes in the poet's mind. Compare, for instance, the *Songs of Twilight* with *The Terrible Year*, and it seems as if these poems were by two different hands. I do not, however, intend to allude to those productions of Victor Hugo that were posterior to 1848; this is beyond the bounds of my assigned ground; and, however tempting it may be to dilate upon such poems as the *Legend of Centuries* and *Chastisement*, that is upon the loftiest expression of this lofty genius, we have quite enough to deal with, for Victor Hugo was as prolific as he was precocious. His lyre seemed to possess all strings; he could render the harsh accents of war and tempests, and the tender, dreamy love of the most graceful lyrism. The public at large know Victor Hugo rather as the Michel Angelo of modern literature, as the powerful exponent of deep and noble thoughts. This aspect of his poetical talent has thrown a shadow over the softer accents of his voice, over those delightful pieces of joy and melancholy, than which, in their own way, there are none nobler in any literature. The following verses from one of his early productions, in the *Songs of Twilight*, are a very fair instance of this charming mood, which seems to have preceded the more mature and luxuriant phase of Hugo's career, as spring precedes summer:—

"If some fragrant lawn be found,
By dews of Heaven blest,
Where are seen the whole year round,
Flowers in beauty drest;
Where rose, pink, and lilies rare,
All in rich profusion are,
I would make a pathway there,
Where your foot should rest.

"If there be, that well can love
Some devoted breast,
Which all honour doth approve,
And the base detest;
If that bosom always beat,
To perform heroic feat,
There I find a pillow meet,
Where your brow should rest.

"If a dream of love there be,
By all sweets possest,
Where each fleeting hour we see
Whatsoe'er is best;
Dream God hallowed, bright, and kind,
Where the soul to soul is joined,
There a shelter would I find,
Where your heart should rest."[1]

Rays and Shadows, written five years later, contains some of Victor Hugo's most brilliant feats of versification; but already the poet's thoughts are becoming more serious. However, although his genius has constantly ascended, as far at least as this book has to deal with him, it cannot for a moment be said that the Hugo of 1830 is unworthy of the Hugo of the most brilliant times. His *Odes and Ballads* contained some of his first lines, written long before he was twenty; and yet therein are found sentiments of the highest order, and verses as majestic, as ele-

[1] "S'il est un charmant gazon
Que le ciel arrose,
Où brille en toute saison
Quelque fleur éclose,
Où l'on cueille à pleine main
Lis, chèvrefeuille ou jasmin,
J'en veux faire le chemin,
Où ton pied se pose.

"S'il est un sein bien aimant
Dont l'honneur dispose
Dont le ferme dévouement,
N'ait rien de morose,
Si toujours ce noble sein
Bat pour un digne dessein!
J'en veux faire le coussin
Où ton front se pose!

"S'il est un rêve d'amour
Parfumé de rose,
Où l'on trouve chaque jour,
Quelque douce chose;
Un rêve que Dieu bénit,
Où l'âme à l'âme s'unit,
Oh! j'en veux faire le nid
Où ton coeur se pose!"

vated and rhythmical, as the magnificent lines of *The Legend of Centuries;* witness the opening stanzas of *The Two Islands:*—

"There are two isles whose oceans wide
A spacious world doth separate,
And which from far, frown o'er the tide,
Like heads of giants, gaunt and great;
And looking on their summits steep,
You guess God raised them from the deep,
For some mysterious dread design,—
Their brows with bolts of thunder smoke,
Their bare sides foam with ocean's stroke,
Their breasts volcanic groans confine.

"These isles, where ocean's shattered spray
Upon the ruthless rocks is cast,
Seem like two treacherous ships of prey
Made by eternal anchors fast.
The hand that settled, bleak and black,
These shores in their unpeopled track,
And clad in fear and mystery,
Perchance thus made them tempest-torn,
That Bonaparte might there be born,
And that Napoleon there might die.

"There was his cradle, there his tomb,
'Tis for all time enough to say;
A world, to life or death, may come;
These words shall never fade away.
Upon those isles, that dismal coast
Shall come, at summons of his ghost,
All peoples of futurity:
Thunders that blast their rugged forms,
And all their rocks, and all their storms,
Nought but of him a record be."[1]

[1] "Il est deux îles dont un monde
Sépare les deux Océans,
Et qui de loin dominent l'onde,
Comme des têtes de géants.
On divine, en voyant leurs cîmes,
Que Dieu les tira des abîmes
Pour un formidable dessein;
Leurs fronts de coups de foudre fume,
Sur leurs flancs nus la mer écume,
Des volcans grondent dans leur sein.

In all these lyrics, excepting perhaps those portions of *Odes and Ballads* that refer to politics, and especially to Napoleon, there is not a discordant, not a jarring note ; whoever can understand poetry finds there treasures of pure poetic feeling. Had Victor Hugo merely confined himself to art pure and simple he would still be the greatest of French lyric poets. But his talent is many-sided, and in romance and in the drama he has left, as in lyric poetry, indelible traces. Every genius has his peculiarities ; the most prominent of Victor Hugo's literary preferences is his love for antithesis. He likes to soar from the earth to the sky, from a worm to a star.

> "Madam, a man is there, in the shade, under your feet,
> Who loves you, lost in the darkness which veils him,
> Who suffers, an earth-worm in love with a star." [1]

He uses antithesis so repeatedly, that in other hands than his the practice would become tedious. That, however, is Hugo's worst fault. His poetry always interests and edifies ; it always appeals to the highest feelings of nature, and the form is never below the essence. It is a splendid picture in a gorgeous frame.

After Victor Hugo, we naturally turn to Alphonse de

"Ces îles où le flot se broie,
Entre des écueils décharnés,
Sont comme deux vaisseaux de proie,
D'une ancre éternelle enchainés.
La main qui de ces noirs rivages,
Disposa les sîtes sauvages,
Et d'effroi les voulut couvrir,
Les fit si terrible peut-être,
Pour que Bonaparte y put naître,
Et Napoléon y mourir !

"Là fut son berceau ! Là sa tombe,
Pour les siècles, c'en est assez ;
Ces mots, qu'un monde naisse ou tombe,
Ne seront jamais effacés.
Sur ces îles à l'aspect sombre
Viendront, à l'appel de son ombre,
Tous les peuples de l'avenir ;
Les foudres qui frappent leurs crêtes,
Et leurs écueils, et leurs tempêtes,
Ne sont plus que son souvenir."

[1] "Madame, sous vos pieds, dans l'ombre, un homme est là,
Qui vous aime, perdu dans la nuit qui le voile ;
Qui souffre, ver de terre amoureuse d'une étoile."

Lamartine.[1] The poet, when quite young, read Berquin, Fénelon's *Telemachus*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the *Bible* abbreviated, and a translation of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered;* and the influence which these books exercised on his youthful mind seems never to have abandoned him. At the age of seventeen he left the college of the Jesuits, where he had been brought up, and began to study the modern poets, who "feel, think, love, sing, as we think, love, sing, we men of modern days: Tasso, Dante, Petrarch, Shakspeare, Milton, Chateaubriand, and, above all, Ossian, that poet of the vague—that northern Dante, as great, as majestic, as supernatural as the Dante of Florence, and who draws often from his phantoms cries more human and more heartrending than those of the heroes of Homer."[2] Lamartine appears to have shared with Napoleon this excessive admiration for Macpherson's Ossian. For nearly three years he remained in Italy, and only returned to his native country in the year 1814. In 1820 he published his first volume of poetry, the *Poetical Meditations*, which met with a great and deserved success. They are original, elegant in form, and filled with partly religious, partly melancholy thoughts, which at that time had the charm of novelty. The *Ode to Manoël* and the *Ode to Bonald* were admired by all true lovers of lyric poetry; whilst the rising generation fell into enthusiasm over such harmonious elegies as *Isolation*, the *Vale*, the *Autumn*, and, above all, over the *Lake*, which has been called "a work of unhoped-for perfection, a profound and limpid union, an image found once, and recognised by all hearts." A few days after the publication of the *Meditations*, he married a young English lady, and published in 1823 his *New Meditations*, which was not so well received as his earlier volume, but which contains, nevertheless, some of the best lyric poems written in French, and one ode, *On Bonaparte*, which possesses great depth, and sometimes reaches the

[1] 1790-1869.

[2] *Confidences*, i. 1.

sublime. His *Death of Socrates*, a poetical imitation of Plato's *Phædo*, and a charming poetical epistle to Casimir Delavigne, had already made their appearance, when he sent into the world *The Last Song of Childe Harold*, a proof of his admiration for Lord Byron, and in which, whilst speaking of Italy, he said: "Pardon me, shades of Rome, if I am going to seek elsewhere men and not human dust." This gave offence to an Italian exile, Colonel Pepe, and a duel took place, which ended in a reconciliation.

He remained five years at Florence as *chargé d'affaires*, and returned to his native country in 1829. In the following year he was elected a member of the Academy; a little after appeared the *Poetical and Religious Harmonies*, which, though admired by many, seem rather diffuse. To use his own words—

"My soul has the eye of an eagle, and my strong thoughts,
Flying like arrows to the goal of their desires,
Each time when my heart heaves, more eager
Than the doves of the forests,
Ascend, ascend always, replaced by others,
And never descend again." [1]

After the July Revolution, de Lamartine went to the East, and one year after his return published (1835) in prose, his *Remembrances, Impressions, Thoughts, and Landscapes during a Voyage in the East*, in which splendid descriptions often take the place of accuracy and observation. This was followed by *Jocelyn*, a poem. Jocelyn, a youth destined to become a priest, meets during the Revolution, amidst the Alpine mountains, Laurence, a young lady of noble birth; love springs up

[1] "Mon âme a l'œil de l'aigle, et mes fortes pensées,
Au but de leurs désirs volent comme des traits,
Chaque fois que mon sein respire, plus pressées
Que les colombes des forêts,
Montent, montent toujours, par d'autres remplacées,
Et ne redescendent jamais."

in their hearts, but an unforeseen circumstance separates them. Jocelyn, after having taken holy orders, sees Laurence amidst the dissipations of the capital, and again when she is dying in a cottage in the mountains, where he buries her in the same grotto which sheltered their chaste loves. The personages are drawn gracefully, in rather vague outline, but the poem is crowded with pure sentiments and grand descriptions. In 1838 appeared another poem, *The Fall of an Angel*, crowded with the strangest fancies, and the most gigantic and eccentric comparisons, which contains also some, but not many, beauties of the first order. The subject of the poem is Oriental, and something like Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. His last poems, the *Poetical Musings*, want that spirit and elegance which distinguished his earlier verse. In a literary record we have no need to mention the political opinions and changes of M. de Lamartine; but his speeches delivered in the different Chambers have always been considered very eloquent, and one of them, uttered on the 25th of February, 1848, is said to have allayed the fury of an excited mob. M. de Lamartine has also written several tales in prose, edited two monthly reviews, *The Counsellor of the People* (1849-1852), and *The Civiliser* (1852-1856), and published during several years a *Familiar Course of Literature*, which, begun in 1856, had a legitimate and well-deserved success. His tragedy in verse, *Toussaint Louverture*, met with little favour when it was played in 1850.[1]

Let us give as a sample of Lamartine's poetry a single *Meditation*:—

"Paternal vales, poor cot, and pleasant field,
Hard by the woods hung on the mountain brow,

[1] The best kown of his Tales are *Raphael* (1849), *Geneviève* (1851), *The Stone-cutter of Saint-Point* (1851), and *Graziella* (1852). He also published his *Confidences* (1849), *New Confidences* (1851), and a *New Voyage in the East* (1853).

Seems your low roof, by ivy tufts concealed,
A nest beneath a bough;

"Ye lawns with intersecting streams and shade
Porch where my father, honoured far and nigh
Told his fat herds returned from grassy glade,
Throw wide your gates. . . . 'Tis I.

"Here rustic gods, to make their home, rejoice;
I hear a horn blare from the turret walls;
The air seems laden with a tearful voice,
Which my young days recalls.

"To thee, my childhood's cradle, I return
Clinging henceforth to thy protecting hearth;
Cities with their vain opulence I spurn,
I had, midst shepherds, birth.

"A child, I loved far over the plain, like these
Till eve after the truant lambs to look;
And then, like them, to wash their snowy fleece
In pool of running brook.

"I love on woodbine's supple chains to swing,
And branch on branch to climb to, where above
First, I might snatch from 'neath the mother's wing
Eggs of the turtle-dove."[1]

[1] "O vallons paternels! doux champs! humble chaumière
Au bord penchant des bois suspendue aux coteaux,
Dont l'humble toit, caché sous les touffes de lierre
Ressemble au nid sous les rameaux!

"Gazons entrecoupés de ruisseaux et d'ombrage!
Seuil antique où mon pere, adoré comme un roi,
Comptait ses gras troupeaux rentrant du pâturage,
Ouvrez-vous! ouvrez-vous! c'est moi.

"Voila du Dieu des champs la rustique demeure;
J'entends l'airain frémir au sommet de ces tours;
Il semble qui dans l'air une voix qui me pleure
Me rappelle à mes premiers jours.

Alfred, Count de Vigny,[1] already referred to as having come under the influence of Sir Walter Scott, was born three years before Victor Hugo, and was, like the latter, a romancist, a dramatist, and a poet. In 1822 appeared his first *Poems;* two years later a so-called passion play, *Eloa, or the Sister of the Angels.* The same year which saw the production of *Cinq Mars* brought to light also his first volume of verse, *Poems Ancient and Modern* (1826), in which "The Deluge," "Moses," and "Florida" were much admired. *The Destinies* and *A Poet's Journal* were published after his death in 1864. One of the sweetest and best of his poems is "The Horn," a reminiscence of the tradition of Roland and Charlemagne. I will give but the beginning and the end.

"I love through the deep woods at close of day,
To hear the horn sounding the stag at bay,
Or hunter's farewell note which echo wakes,
And the north wind through all the forest takes.

"How oft have I a midnight vigil kept,
And smiled to hear it, yet more often wept;
It seemed the sound prophetic which of old
The coming deaths of paladins foretold . . .

"Oui, je reviens à toi, berceau de mon enfance,
Embrasser pour jamais tes foyers protecteurs;
Loin de moi les cités et leur vaine opulence,
Je suis né parmi les pasteurs!

"Enfant j'aimais, comme eux, à suivre dans la plaine
Les agneaux, pas à pas, égaré jusqu'au soir;
A revenir, comme eux, baigner leur blanche laine
Dans l'eau courante du lavoir.

"J'aimais à me suspendre aux lianes légères,
A gravir dans les airs de rameaux en rameaux,
Pour ravir, le premier, sous l'aile de leurs mères,
Les tendres œufs des toutereaux."

[1] 1799-1863.

"The horses halt upon the mountain-brow
Foam-whitened; 'neath their feet is Roncevaux
By day's last dying flame scarce coloured o'er;
The far horizon shows the flying Moor.

"'Seest thou nought, Turpin, in the torrent-bed?'
'I saw two knights; one dying and one dead,
Both crushed 'neath a black rock's vast fragment lie;
The strongest holds a horn of ivory;
His soul's last breath twice called us to his aid.'

"God! how the horn wails through the forest glade!"[1]

The youngest of the poets of the romantic school was Alfred de Musset,[2] and he was also the first who succumbed to death. He, too, was a dramatist and a novelist; and he left behind him the *Confession of a Child of the Age,* written in his twenty-seventh year, which recalls in some sort the *Confessions* of Rousseau, and in a few of its passages is as filthily realistic. In fact Musset's father had been a literary disciple of Rousseau's, of no great note; and the influence of

[1] "J'aime le son du cor, le soir, au fond des bois,
Soit qu'il chante les pleurs de la biche aux abois,
Ou l'adieu du chasseur que l'écho faible accueille
Et que le vent du nord porte de feuille en feuille.

"Que de fois, seul dans l'ombre à minuit demeuré,
J'ai souri de l'entendre, et plus souvent pleuré!
Car je croyais ouïr de ces bruits prophétiques
Qui précédaient la mort des paladins antiques. . . .

"Sur le plus haut des monts s'arrêtent les chevaux;
L'écume les blanchit; sous leurs pieds, Roncevaux
Des feux mourants du jour à peine se colore.
A l'horizon lointain fuit l'étendard du More.

"'Turpin, n'as-tu rien vu dans le fond du torrent?'
'J'y vois deux chevaliers: l'un mort, l'autre expirant.
Tous deux sont écrasés sous une roche noire;
Le plus fort, dans sa main, élève un cor d'ivoire,
Son âme en s'exhalant nous appela deux fois.'

"Dieu! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois!"

[2] 1810-1857.

the eighteenth century romancist was strong upon the young romancist of the nineteenth century. The genius of de Musset was more unbalanced, more ill-regulated than that of any of his contemporaries; "he was the merry and capricious Ariel, taking it into his head here and there to play the part of Caliban; he was the sly Puck, taking delight in the ass's head of Titania's lover. The utmost of which the mind is capable in suddenness, caprice, and promiscuity, seemed to compose his essence; the grotesque, the quaint, the impossible welled within him every instant with the most charming inspirations, and formed the many-coloured tissue of his style. There was in him something of the agile, loose, adorably impertinent. Like the teasing gnat of la Fontaine, his happiness was in making the old classic lions fume learnedly. Manifold, invulnerable, he copied now the fresh attractiveness of Mathurin Regnier (*don Paëz*), now the passion of Faust (*The Cup and the Lips*), sometimes the glowing pictures of *Parisina*, *Lara*, *The Corsair* (*Portia*), more frequently the epic zig-zags of *Don Juan* (*Namouna*); whilst, a rival of Marivaux, he brought to the *Théâtre Français* his delightful *Caprices*."[1] His *Ballad to the Moon*, a parody of the romantic school, was, in its time, sung all over Paris.[2]

De Musset's earliest production was a volume of poems, the *Tales of Spain and Italy* (1830). Perhaps his masterpiece in verse is *Rolla*, which appeared in 1835 in the columns of the *Revue des Deux Mondes;* though the *Nights*, which fol-

[1] Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 646.

[2] "C'était dans la nuit brune
Sur un clocher jauni
La lune,
Comme un point sur un i . . .
Es-tu l'œil du ciel borgne?
Quel chérubin cafard
Nous lorgne
Sous ton masque blafard?
"N'es-tu rien qu'une boule,
Qu'un grand faucheux bien gras,
Qui roule
Sans pattes et sans bras?
Qui t'avait éborgnée
L'autre nuit? T'etais-tu
Cognée
A quelque arbre pointu?"

lowed soon after, contain, as do also his minor poems, many passages of exquisite beauty, which have secured to him a more than ephemeral fame. Rolla is half Faust, half Manfred—

> "Of all the rakes in that city of the world
> In which license is the cheapest drug,
> The oldest in vice, and the most prolific—
> To wit, Paris—the greatest of rakes
> Was Jacques Rolla."

Yet no ordinary *debauché*, for the heart of humanity stirred his own heart at its deepest; and Rolla was not merely vicious, but he carried in his soul the Nemesis of his vice.

> "He took three purses of gold, and for three years
> Lived in the sunlight, without dreaming of laws;
> And never did child of Adam, beneath the sacred light,
> Display on earth, from the rising to the setting sun,
> A greater scorn of men and of laws."[1]

But he was not completely happy in his enjoyment, for his mind had a Byronic background; and he instinctively felt that, as soon as the cup of pleasure was exhausted, a terrible recompense would follow, and would be administered by his own hand. Now the poem takes a wider sweep: A den of infamy is before us, and its inhabitants are drawn with horrible fidelity, reminding one of similar descriptions of

[1] "De tous les débauchés de la ville du monde
Où le libertinage est à meilleur marché,
De la plus vieille en vice et de la plus féconde,
Je veux dire Paris—le plus grand débauché
Était Jacques Rolla.
Il prit trois bourses d'or, et, durant trois années,
Il vécut au soleil sans se douter des lois;
Et jamais fils d'Adam, sous la sainte lumière,
N'a, de l'est au couchant, promené sur la terre
Un plus large mépris des peuples et des lois."

Regnier. An innocent girl is asleep on her bed, "a girl of fifteen, almost a young woman; . . . the small cherubim who watches over her soul doubts if he be her brother or her lover."[1] The mother sits by her side — the mother, wholly bad, the slave of poverty, and of him who has gold. The idea is dwelt upon in verses of infinite pathos, prolonged to the point of positive pain. The man and the gold are ready, and the bargain is made. It is Rolla, who with his last coins has purchased this last draught of worldly bliss. The time has come to which he has so long looked forward; it is the penultimate throb of his existence, and he has sworn that it shall be the deepest. The victim loves the betrayer—it is but part of the bargain; and again the poet breaks out into exquisite pathos.

"Woman! strange source whence joys and torture rise!
Mysterious altar where, in sacrifice,
We hear alternate prayers and blasphemies!
Say in what echo, in what air reside.
Those nameless words which through all ages bide,
And, though but madness, yet five thousand years
Have hung on lover's lips, and still be there." [2]

[1] "Un enfant de quinze ans—presque une jeune femme . .
Le petit chérubin qui veille sur son âme
Doute s'il est son frère ou s'il est son amant . . .
Si ce n'est pas ta mère, ô pâle jeune fille,
Quelle est donc cette femme assise à ton chevet,
Qui regarde l'horloge et l'âtre qui petille,
En secouant la tête et d'un air inquiet?
Qu'attend-elle si tard?—Pour qui, si c'est ta mère,
S'en va-t-elle entr'ouvrir, depuis quelques instants,
Ta porte et ton balcon . . . si ce n'est pour ton père?
Et ton père, Marie, est mort depuis longtemps.
Pour qui donc des flacons, cette table fumante,
Que, de ses propres mains, elle vient de servir?
Pour qui donc ces flambeaux, et qui donc va venir?

[2] "O femme! étrange objet de joie et de supplice!
Mystérieux autel où, dans le sacrifice,
On entend tour à tour blasphémer et prier!

The cup is quaffed to the dregs; the long soliloquy, face to face with death, comes to an end; Rolla dies by the side of his mistress, without quailing, without hesitating for a moment in the accomplishment of his destiny. It is a sombre, pitiful, lurid picture—a picture which could not have been drawn in the eighteenth century, for lack of sufficient depth of passion, and by no one else in the nineteenth century, for lack of that very chaos of tenderness and ungentle strength which de Musset possessed. It is a picture revolting but startingly true to nature in most of its details, though not in the portraits of the hero and heroine; and what is more, it is the work of a genuine poet.

A specimen of Alfred de Musset in a sad mood, bearing for its title *Sur une Morte* may interest the reader :—

"She might be lovely, if the night
Carved in some chapel's dark recess,
By Buonarotti's chilling might,
May claim the praise of loveliness.

"Good was she, if it goodness reach
To give an alms in passing by
Without one feeling look or speech,
If loveless gold be charity.

"And she could think, if that you deem
In soft and modulated tone
To babble like a ceaseless stream;
Is proof of thought—else had she none.

"She used to pray, if two fine eyes,
Now coldly fastened on the ground,
Now raised as coldly to the skies,
Worthy the name of prayer be found.

Dis-moi, dans quel écho, dans quel air vivent-elles,
Ces paroles sans nom, et pourtant éternelles,
Qui ne sont qu'un délire, et depuis cinq mille ans
Se suspendent encore aux lèvres des amants?"

"She would have smiled, if blighted flower,
That ne'er expanded to the sky,
Could open to the general power
Of winds that pass it heedless by.

"She might have wept, if, when there lay
Her hand on what she called her heart,
She e'er had felt that human clay
Softened by dews the heavens impart.

"She might have loved, but selfish pride,
Like lamps a useless light that hold,
Standing the coffined dead beside,
Guarded her heart, so poor and cold.

"She's dead; she never lived; she stopped
At seeming, seemed to live, though dead.
The volume from her hand she dropped,
From which no single word she read."[1]

In the following verses, dated 1840, and called *Sadness*, de Musset depicts himself; and a lamentable picture it is:—

[1] "Elle était belle, si la Nuit
Qui dort dans la sombre chapelle,
Où Michel-Ange a fait son lit,
Immobile peut être belle.

"Elle était bonne, s'il suffit
Qu'en passant la main s'ouvre et donne,
Sans que Dieu n'ait rien vu, rien dit;
Si l'or sans pitié fait l'aumône.

"Elle pensait, si le vain bruit
D'une voix douce et cadencée,
Comme le ruisseau qui gémit,
Peut faire croire à la pensée.

"Elle priait, si deux beaux yeux,
Tantôt s' attachant à la terre,
Tantôt se levant vers les cieux,
Peuvent s'appeler la prière.

"Elle aurait souri, si la fleur
Qui ne s'est point épanouie,
Pouvait s'ouvrir à la fraîcheur,
Du vent qui passe et qui l'oublie

"Elle aurait pleuré, si sa main,
Sur son cœur froidement posée,
Eût jamais dans l'argile humain
Senti la céleste rosée.

"Elle aurait aimé, si l'orgueil,
Pareil à la lampe inutile
Qu'on allume près d'un cercueil
N'eût veillé sur son cœur stérile.

"Elle est morte et n'a point vécu,
Elle faisait semblant de vivre,
De ses mains est tombé le livre,
Dans lequel elle n'a rien lu."

"I have wasted my strength and my life;
And friends have left; and my heart has died.
I have no longer even the pride
Which gave me fame in a worthless strife.

"Yet of old, long since, I thought to tread
In the noble pathway of truth and right;
But when I saw where their footsteps led
I swerved unequal to the sight.

"Now I see too late, they must prevail,
And all who quit them can only fail
Of all that's noble, great, and wise:

"God calls me; and I have nought to say,
Not a plea on which one hope to stay,
Save that some tears have dimmed my eyes."[1]

Let us take him finally in a lighter mood. Here is the *Song of Fortunio,* from the *Chandelier:*—

"If you think I shall declare,
Whose love I seek,
Not for a kingdom could I dare
Her name to speak.

"(But I will join you in a glee,
If you think meet,
That I adore—that fair is she
As is the wheat.)

"I act but as her fantasy
My will doth stir,
And if she need my life, then I
Can give it her.

[1] "J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie,
Et mes amis et ma gaité:
J'ai perdu jusqu' à la fierté,
Qui faisait croire à mon genie,

"Quand j'ai connu la Vérité,
J'ai cru que c'était une amie;
Quand je l'ai comprise et sentie,
J'en étais déjà dégoûté.

"Et pourtant elle est éternelle
Et ceux qui se sont passés d'elle
Ici-bas ont tout ignoré.

"Dieu parle, il faut qu'on lui réponde,
Le seul bien qui me reste au monde
Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré."

"The anguish that a love untold
Makes us deplore,
Within its grasp my heart must fold
Till life is o'er.

"I love too deeply to declare
Whose love I feel;
And for my love, can die—but ne'er
Her name reveal."[1]

Undoubtedly the most brilliant exponent of satirical poetry after the Revolution of 1830 was Auguste Barbier.[2] Some men make revolutions, but of Barbier it may be said that the Revolution made him. It inspired him with vengeful strains full of wild patriotism, that have only been equalled by some portions of Victor Hugo's *Chastisements.* One should read *Les Jambes* to realise to what height of savage grandeur the French language can rise. These poems were published separately in 1830 in the *Revue de Paris;* the most conspicuous for beauty of form are *La Curée, L'Emeute,* and *La Popularité.* These satires, admirable in style as well as magnificent in inspiration, were immediately recognised as the work of a great poet. Unfortunately Auguste Barbier did not justify the hopes raised by this striking *debut;* his second publication, *Il Pianto,* is not comparable to *Les Jambes.* It may be that Barbier was unadapted for any other style of poetry than satire. For unaccount-

[1] "Si vous croyez que je vais dire
Qui j'ose aimer,
Je ne saurais, pour un empire,
Vous la nommer.

"Nous allons chanter à la ronde,
Si vous voulez,
Que je l'adore et qu'elle est blonde
Comme les blés.

'Je fais ce que sa fantaisie
Veut m'ordonner,
Et je puis, s'il lui faut ma vie,
La lui donner.

"Du mal qu'une amour ignorée
Nous fait souffrir,
J'en porte l'âme déchirée
Jusqu'à mourir

"Mais j'aime trop pour que je die
Qui j'ose aimer,
Et je veux mourir pour ma mie
Sans la nommer."

[2] 1805.

able reasons, the satirist gave no further signs of life after the strains I have mentioned; and eventually he retired altogether from literature.

Sainte-Beuve,[1] who is chiefly known as a literary critic, and whom we shall meet in that capacity anon, wrote some poems, *Consolations*, when the writer was twenty-six years old; and published in 1837 *Thoughts in August*, which though not remarkable as triumphs of versification, are elegant and worthy of being read, the same delicate grace distinguishing their author as a poet which has earned him high fame as a writer of prose. He had already, in 1829, published a volume of elegiac poems under the pseudonym of Joseph Delorme, to whom he attributed them as posthumous remains. Emile Deschamps,[2] who was also a dramatist, wrote *French and Foreign Studies* in light and fluent verse; whilst his brother Antoni[3] is best known as the skilful and not ungraceful translator of Dante, and as the author of a volume of refined *Studies of Italy*, reminiscences of his sojourn for some years in the south of Italy. Théophile Gautier,[4] a writer of romances, voyages, and general essays, a literary, dramatic, and art critic, is also known for two or three volumes of spirited and graceful verse; *The Comedy of Death* (1838), and *Enamels and Cameos* (1852) amongst them. Let me quote, as a final example of the Romantic school, a few verses from a *terza rima* of Gautier's—

"From Sixtus' fane when Michael Angelo
His work completed radiant and sublime,
The scaffold left and sought the streets below,

"Nor eyes nor arms would lower for a time;
His feet knew not to walk upon the ground,
Unused, to earth, so long in heavenly clime.

[1] 1804-1869. [2] 1791-1871. [3] 1800-1869. [4] 1811-1872.

"Upwards he gazed while three long months went round,
So might an angel look who should adore
The dread triangle mystery profound.

"My brother poets while their spirits soar
In the world's ways at every moment trip,
Walking in dreams while they the heavens explore."[1]

[1] "Quand Michel-Ange eut peint la chapelle Sixtine,
Et que de l'échafaud, sublime et radieux,
Il fut redescendu dans la cité latine,

"Il ne pouvait baisser ni les bras ni les yeux ;
Ses pieds ne savaient pas comment marcher sur terre ;
Il avait oublié le monde dans les cieux.

"Trois grands mois il garda cette attitude austère,
On l'eût pris pour un ange en extase devant
Le saint triangle d'or, au moment du mystère.

"Frère, voilà pourquoi les poëtes, souvent,
Buttent à chaque pas sur les chemins du monde :
Les yeux fichés au ciel, ils s'en vont en rêvant."

CHAPTER III.

§ 1. The Ideas of the Age.

We have seen how completely the poetry and the history of the nineteenth century in France, as in every other country of Europe, are in contrast with the corresponding literary forms which were in vogue before the Revolution. Let us now push our inquiries farther afield, and amongst the critics, the philosophers, the dramatists, the novelists, the men of letters in general, endeavour to form a comprehensive notion of the new ideas of the age. For the literature of the Empire had revealed nothing more clearly than this—that new ideas were absolutely necessary if letters were to be redeemed from the degrading condition in which, like a horse in a mill, they had begun to move round and round upon their own path; still observing the worn-out classical forms, but apparently incapable, not to say contemptuous, of novelty in conception. The seventeenth century, the age of authority in literature, had been brilliant in the extreme; the eighteenth century, the age of scepticism, had also had a special brilliance of its own; the nineteenth century, destined to be the age of defiance, and, as a necessary consequence in literature, the most brilliant of the three, had barely revealed its character before the close of its first quarter. When Béranger had written his *Roi d'Yvetot*, de Musset his *Rolla*, Hugo his *Hernani*, Thiers and Guizot their first historical masterpieces, the present century may be said to have declared what it was to be for France and for

literature. In the light of subsequent history we can perceive that there had been premonitory symptoms at a much earlier date; and of course the turning-point between the past and present is not to be arbitrarily fixed at the turning-point of the century. It was at the Revolution that the forefathers of the present generation of Frenchmen committed themselves to a new world of facts and ideas; it was then that the current epoch of literature virtually and effectively began. We have seen it in the theatre, in Chénier, Ducis, and the great scenic interpreters. We have seen it in the revival of Christian devotion and art, in Chateaubriand and others. We have seen it in the invasion of foreign ideas and characters, in Madame de Staël, in the English romancer and the English poet of defiance.[1] The same influence, anterior in its source to the great nineteenth century poets and historians whom we have most recently been considering, but contemporaneous with them in its effects, may be distinctly traced in the writings of such men as Villemain and Sainte-Beuve, of Cousin, Comte, and Montalembert, of Balzac and George Sand.

§ 2. The Critics.

The three famous lecturers of the Sorbonne, by whom the University of Paris revived under the Restoration all its ancient glories—Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin—were the head and front of the complex school of thought which inspired the timid governments of Louis XVIII. and Charles X. with so much alarm. Villemain[2] was in every way fitted to be an apostle of innovation. Himself purely classical in his training, in his intellectual bent and faculties, not inferior in point of style to the polished writers of the preceding century, he

[1] Scott and Byron.

[2] 1790-1869.

was at the same time essentially a man of the future rather than of the past; bold in the acceptance as he was acute in the perception of the ideas which the Revolution had developed. He recognised without difficulty the Titanic birth which had resulted from the marriage of artistic Christianity with scientific infidelity: and instead of weakly starting back in horror at the portent, he saw, before the majority of his contemporaries, how incalculably the world might profit by what it certainly could not suppress. Burke in England, and perhaps Fontanes in France, were amongst those who saw the same thing, but regarded it in a different light. Villemain was disposed neither to imitate Burke in his passionate denunciations nor to assist Fontanes—whose pupil he had been—in a feeble opposition to the spirit of the age; and the eagerness with which his lectures were heard, the enthusiasm with which they were praised,[1] sufficiently attested the harmony of his views with those of the mass of his countrymen.

Born at Paris in the first year of the Revolution, Abel-François Villemain was not of an age to commit himself politically before the Empire had made circumspection and patience a necessity. He devoted himself chiefly to literary studies; and in 1812 his *Eulogy of Montaigne* was crowned by the Academy. The like honour was earned, at intervals of two years, by a discourse on *The Advantages and Inconveniences of Criticism*, and a *Eulogy of Montesquieu*. By these works he had attracted the favourable notice of the party which came into power with the Restoration; and in 1816 he was appointed to the chair of literature at the University, which he occupied until his lectures were suspended, in common with those of Guizot and Cousin. For six years Villemain cautiously engaged himself in politics, and was appointed a *maître des requêtes*. As Professor he delivered the most suc-

[1] The *Globe* spoke of Villemain's lectures as "one of the most important intellectual events of the epoch."

cessful and brilliant lectures, of which those up to 1826 are lost, but those dating from that time were subsequently published as a *Course of French Literature: a Picture of the Eighteenth Century.* His popularity as a lecturer was great; for in addition to a vast store of information, clearly and harmoniously exposed, he had all the spirit and *verve* of a French orator, and the many points of his style were seized upon almost before they were uttered. It is impossible to read his literary judgments without being struck by his ardent love of beauty wherever he could find it, and by a serene independence and courage of thought, which rises superior both to national vanity and to the prevailing fashions of his day. There is no reason why I should not repeat the well-known story of one of Villemain's triumphs in his chair at the Sorbonne, which illustrates not only his command over his audience, but also the catholicity of his literary and human sympathy. It was at a time when the Turkish atrocities in Greece had made all Europe shudder with horror, and had enlisted Byron amongst many other foreign volunteers in the cause of the oppressed nationality. Villemain was comparing the *Iphigenia* of Euripides with that of Racine, to the advantage of the former. "In Racine's play," said the critic, "heroic manners are not painted in all their simplicity. Respect for modern etiquette is too often associated with the eloquent expression of passion; the language of love and the delicacies of gallantry, the very perfectness of diction and style seem, in spite of the seduction of the picture, to be at times little in harmony with the spirit of a subject which has for its *dénouement* the sacrifice of a human victim." Hereupon the lecturer translated one or two passages of the Greek play, by way of contrast, amidst the applause of his hearers. Feeling himself suddenly inspired by the contact of his literary theme with the pressing question of the day, Villemain broke out into a brief rhapsody:—"The Iphigenias of modern Greece will be

those Christian virgins drowned beneath the waves, who, in their fresh graves, already consecrated, are invoked under the name of virgin-martyrs; the heroes which that country will celebrate shall be those venerable patriarchs, basely massacred, whose shrouds, torn to pieces and carried about over every part of Greece, have served as a talisman to the warriors of Samos and of Ispara."

In politics, whilst Villemain was distinctly Liberal in his tendencies, he was at the same time well balanced and moderate, so that he remained on fairly good terms with all the successive French Governments, from the first Empire to the second. Under Louis Philippe he was made a peer of France. At the Academy he had succeeded to the *fauteuil* of Fontanes as early as 1821, and in 1834 he was elected as its perpetual secretary. A life so prosperous, during a period of comparative peace and prosperity to France, afforded abundant leisure for the pursuit of Villemain's favourite studies. In literature he followed up his first *Course* with *Studies of Ancient and Foreign Literature* (1846), and *Select Studies on Modern Literature* (1857), to which must be added a number of miscellaneous essays on various literary and allied historical subjects.

The general spirit pervading the literary works of Villemain as a whole is comprised in the desire and the attempt to trace the origin of modern language and literature from the ancient classical source; or rather, the origin of modern literature and language in France, in so far as these were due to the classical influence. He neglects the Teutonic ideas, save where he finds them already developed in England; and even here he does not discriminate them from the neo-classical forms and developments of Western Europe in general. Hence his inquiries and their results are to this extent partial; but partial rather in the scope of the critic than in his conclusions. He does not build on his facts and premisses as though he were building on something wider and firmer; his

generalisations appear to be on the whole true and valuable, because he has known of how much his materials were capable. Moreover, his inductions are attained by so accurate a process, and so systematic a scale, that it becomes easy for those who are in possession of more materials to extend his generalisations and to enlarge his conclusions.[1]

A French critic observes :—

"From more than one point of view, the literary course of Villemain was the natural complement of the historical course of Guizot, and the philosophical course of Cousin. The same spirit of confidence in human reason animated these three courses: literary rationalism corresponded with historical rationalism and philosophical rationalism ; but, on the other hand, the same spiritual tendencies made themselves felt in all. Here and there in these lectures intruded a point of opposition, under the form of epigrams, brought in with so much art, and so carefully polished, that it was difficult in France, that *frondeur*, carping land in which everything is forgiven to wit, to show annoyance with a man who interested even those against whom he discharged his arrows. The pith of this course (Villemain's) was a broad spirit of independence, a deep perception of the beauties of the ancient genius added to a sincere admiration for intellectual power wherever it might be found. From Villemain's course, as from those of Guizot and Cousin, the young men of the age drew their supplies, with that worship of ideas which had its nobility even in its excesses, that self-reliance and that bold impartiality which spring from the comparison of literatures. It was thus that the lectures of the illustrious professor contributed to the movement which threw literature upon the path of innovations which his severe taste was bound for the most part to condemn, inasmuch as they rapidly tended to pass the limits of the true and of the beautiful." [2]

[1] Villemain also wrote a *Picture of Christian Eloquence in the Fourth Century* (1849), *Studies in Modern History* (1846), a *History of Gregory VII.* (1859), etc.

[2] A. Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration.* vol. ii. p. 378.

Amongst the distinctively literary critics who earned their first celebrity in the pages of a newspaper, and of whom several have obtained a more than journalistic fame, none is more eminent than Sainte-Beuve,[1] whom we have already encountered in the *Cénacle* of Victor Hugo. Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve was born at Boulogne, and began to study for the medical profession, but soon discovered that his forte lay in historical and literary criticism. He was little more than twenty when, after taking up his residence in Paris, he found himself an intimate associate of the romantic school of poets, and a contributor to the *Globe*. Like many another man of genius, whose prose was destined to delight his contemporaries, Sainte-Beuve began by thinking that poetry was the special form in which it behoved him to cast his thoughts. Of his poems we have already spoken. The measure of his critical faculty may be taken in a work published in 1828, which is one of the most remarkable, if not the most brilliant and caustic, of all that he has written. This was a *Historical and Critical Sketch of French Poetry in the Sixteenth Century*, a work of great perspicacity, dealing in a fresh and vigorous style with the age of Ronsard and the Pléiade. Sainte-Beuve treats the school of Ronsard and du Bellay in an original manner, and has something more in view than merely to describe and to criticise it. The founders of the Pléiade, it will be remembered, assumed to themselves the task of reforming and re-integrating the French language; they prided themselves on restoring French to the level of classical tongues, not by servile imitation of the ancient Greek and Latin, but by asserting and illustrating the independence of the national idiom, and proving its sufficiency for the expression of a lofty poetic literature. Sainte-Beuve records the attempt and the comparative failure of the Pléiade; and then he strikes out for

[1] 1804-1869.

himself the new line of criticism which constitutes the originality of his work. He regrets the failure of Ronsard and his friends; he follows the argument of Joachim du Bellay in his *Defence and Illustration of the French Tongue*, and counsels his own age to take up the task where the poets of the sixteenth century had left it, and to renew the French tongue and the French literature in the form which they had sought to give it. He believed moreover—and with some reason—that his own generation had already begun to go back upon the ancient school of poetry, especially in the matter of rhythm and the arts of composition. "As for the forms of speech and language, there was less whereby we might profit in our old poets. The English and Italians, in order to renovate their tongue, have only to carry it up to the primitive sources of Shakspeare and of Dante; but we have lacked those vast sacred lakes in reserve against the day of regeneration, and we have had to draw from the present and from ourselves. Yet if we recall certain pages of the *Illustration* of Joachim du Bellay, certain sparkling passages of Mademoiselle de Gournay, of d'Aubigné, and of Regnier, if we picture that bold and careless fashion of style, without rule or examples, which proceeds at hazard as the thought may direct it, we shall find in these a few general points of resemblance with the manner which tends to prevail in our own days." [1]

The idea broached by Sainte-Beuve is, it must be confessed, a little vague; and there is not much to be said for the critical strength, at this period of his career, of a man who would abandon the style of Corneille, Molière, la Fontaine, and Voltaire, to return to Ronsard, or even to d'Aubigné. Not that this bare statement exhausts all that Sainte-Beuve intended to recommend, or suggests all that is really valuable in his advice. It is impossible that any language, at any

[1] Vol. ii. p. 338.

phase of its existence, can do itself justice without constantly turning back for nourishment upon its former self. In so far as the young critic persuaded his readers to compare and strengthen their style by reference to the sixteenth century, he undoubtedly did a useful thing. The freshness and suppleness of d'Aubigné, for instance, were certainly capable of being imitated with good effect by those who had been trained in the stiff courtly forms of the eighteenth century ; and in this respect Saint-Beuve's work had a good influence on his generation. He himself set the example of carrying the use of the archaisms which he commended to the point of exaggeration, and his style, especially in the elegiac verses to which reference has been made, is antiquated in the extreme. He lived to throw off much of this juvenile affectation ; and his riper style is on the whole a happy one. For the rest, the romantic school of French poetry, of which Sainte-Beuve made himself the du Bellay, has a greater affinity with the poetry of Villon and Marot, and of the Pléiade—which, as I have ventured to assert, was more in harmony with Villon and Marot than Ronsard was willing to admit—than it is with the poetry of any which succeeded them. Sainte-Beuve exaggerated, no doubt ; but he exaggerated a useful idea, and he deserves to be regarded as one of the apostles of the new literature of France.

As a literary critic, pure and simple,—and this must always be Sainte-Beuve's best title to esteem,—he was bold, independent, and nothing if not pungent, hiding this pungency often under an appearance of bonhomie. "The critical spirit," he himself says in his *Thoughts*, the volume which came next in order after the poems of Joseph Delorme, "is by nature facile, sinuous, ready of movement, and comprehensive ;" and in fact, nothing strikes us more forcibly in the collected works of Sainte-Beuve than the catholicity and many-sidedness of his mind, the excessive mobility and freedom of his

judgment. His *Literary Portraits* and *Contemporary Portraits* bear witness not only to enthusiasm, hero-worship, and dogmatism, but also to a generous attachment to the principles which he had adopted, and to his freedom from conventionality, and his superiority to merely traditional judgments. His critical estimates frequently made a sensation amongst the reading public, in so many respects were they opposed to what had hitherto been the received opinions of literary men. More than once Sainte-Beuve gave offence by attempting to reverse the judgment of posterity upon a man who seemed to have been unduly praised or blamed; but as a rule he drew the majority of his readers with him. Subsequent criticism has by no means always ratified his conclusions; thus, in his adverse judgment of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, for which Chateaubriand openly reproached him, and Royer-Collard no less openly applauded him, I imagine that the preponderating opinion of the present day would side with Chateaubriand. Sainte-Beuve himself came to admit the invalidity of some of his earlier criticisms; his *Causeries du Lundi,* written from 1849 until 1869, and republished afterwards in volumes with additions, contain more than one or two expressions of regret for the occasional hypercriticism of his *Portraits.* The toil which he took to produce these *Causeries* was very great. "Assisted by a secretary, Sainte-Beuve began every Monday morning to prepare the article for the following week. Having selected his subject, to which he had often given much reflection, and which he had often treated in another form, he dictated a rough outline of the article, filling in blanks, and making additions, with his own hand. This first draft was then copied, revised, and sometimes written over again. For twelve hours daily, from Monday to Thursday, he laboured in his study, refusing to receive visitors or to be interrupted in any way, and taking no relaxation till the evening. By

Friday the manuscript was ready for the printer, and on that day Sainte-Beuve went and read over what he had composed to Dr. Véron (first proprietor of the *Revue de Paris* and then of the *Constitutionnel*), whose judgment he valued for a reason resembling that which induced Molière to respect the verdict of his old housekeeper. After profiting by Dr. Véron's suggestions or objections, he had the article put in type; after the proof had been subjected to a revision as minute and searching as that which the manuscript had undergone, it was pronounced ready for publication on Monday. When it did appear, the accuracy and aptness of every quotation, the correctness of every name and date, were as noteworthy as its general finish and effect as a whole. Very seldom are newspaper articles as worthy of preservation as the *Causeries du Lundi*, nor is it the rule, perhaps, for contributors of literary articles to newspapers, even if endowed with Sainte-Beuve's talent, to possess in equal measure his capacity for taking pains."[1]

His early inclination to laud was the natural price which Sainte-Beuve had to pay for his too eager partisanship with the romantic school, and also, it must be confessed, for his constant strain after originality and speciality. His able biographer, M. Jules Levallois,[2] aptly says of him: "He was concerned with individuals, not with ideas. General theories as such repel him when they do not alarm him; but if he must invent a formula in order to explain, to render accessible and popular the talent of any prominent individual under whose charm he is for the time being, we shall see that he discovers it with a rare decision, expounds a complete system with a marvellous lucidity, supported, if need be, by the most abstract argument. It is the poetry of the *Cénacle*, of Emile

[1] I have taken these lines from Mr. W. F. Rae's appreciative introductory chapter on Sainte-Beuve's Life and Writings, prefixed to his *English Portraits*.

[2] *Sainte-Beuve: La Méthode du Critique*, p. 62.

and Antoni Deschamps, of de Vigny, of Victor Hugo, which he in the first instance supported, propagated, formulated, far more than his own: I mean that towards which his instincts carried him. Throughout his life, but more particularly in his youth, his poetry and æsthetics were those of his connections and of his friendships."

But Sainte-Beuve was not always laudatory, and his articles sent anonymously to the *Revue Suisse* during 1843 and the two following years, and only published with his name last year (1876),[1] abundantly prove this. Thus he attacks Lamennais on account of his book, *Amschaspands and Darvands*, Lamartine, Chateaubriand,[2] Victor Hugo,[3] the Ultramontanes, Magnin, Sue, de Genoude, Balzac, Gozlan, J. Janin, and many others, and this sometimes openly, but also sometimes by fastening on the unfortunate man whom he criticises an adjective, a phrase, and even now and then an ironical compliment, which will stick to him. He calls Guizot "a professor of history;" Cousin "a professor of philosophy," and "the most eloquent of sophists, in the ancient and favourable sense of the word," and "Villemain the most eloquent rhetorician," in the most favourable sense also. And even the ladies come in for their share. Madame Colet, Madame Sand, Madame de Girardin, Madame Benjamin Constant, of whom he says that "she is still a shepherdess, even at the age of seventy-two,"[4] receive from time to time

[1] Sainte-Beuve, *Chroniques Parisiennes.*

[2] "M. de Chateaubriand, le *good old man*, comme disent les journaux anglais, c'est-à-dire en bon français *le vieux bonhomme* . . . ô vanité de la gloire humaine! Cela s'appelle être à la fois couronné du chapeau de laurier et coiffé du bonnet de coton." *Chronique* of the 3d of December 1843.

[3] In his *Chroniques* of March 10, and March 20 and 29, 1843, Sainte-Beuve attacks *les Burgraves*, and says, "La carrière politique de Victor Hugo a été toute une révolution. Granier de Cassagnac s'en est fait finalement le Robespierre; je me flatte de n'en avoir été que le Vergniaud. *Hernani* a été pour moi la fin de l'assemblée législative."

[4] *Chronique Parisienne*, August 27th, 1843.

some sarcastic notice. Yet, in spite of all that Sainte-Beuve had written or done, to him may be justly applied the words which he himself wrote of Villemain: "Villemain (Sainte-Beuve) does not love nor feel directly either religion, philosophy, poetry, arts, or nature. What does he love then? He loves *literature*, and, through it, everything."

Sainte-Beuve, whose grandmother was an Englishwoman, was intimately acquainted with English literature, and "had read and admired the works of the greatest English poets, and also those of Pope and Goldsmith, Cowper, Bowles, Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and Wordsworth," on some of whom he wrote very appreciative essays. He became a member of the French Academy in 1845, being at that time engaged upon a *History of Port-Royal*, an interesting but rather discursive work, which employed him until the year 1848. He was appointed Professor of Latin Poetry at the Collége de France in 1854, but the students refused to listen to his lectures on account of political animosity. He then became Professor at the Normal School, and resigned at the end of four years, and resumed his connection with the *Constitutionnel*. He was nominated a Senator of the Second Empire in 1865, and his accepting such a post has been blamed by many; even there, however, he always vindicated the dignity and freedom of letters. He was not the only one of the new school of criticism who at the same time owed allegiance to the new historical school. Vitet,[1] another of the contributors to the *Globe*, is honourably known for his trilogy on the epoch of the Ligue, which he elucidated in his *Barricades* (1826), the *States of Blois*, and the *Death of Henry III.* Vitet trusted for his materials almost entirely to contemporary documents and pamphlets, receiving little at second-hand from the historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and the pamphlets of which he avails himself most willingly are those of Huguenot

[1] 1802-1873.

writers. The result is a very interesting and detailed, but at the same time a somewhat one-sided narrative. As a literary historian, dominated by the march of the new ideas of the century, Napoleon-Désiré Nisard,[1] who succeeded Villemain in his professorship, is a writer of great elegance and of painstaking accuracy. His principal works, most of which were published before 1848, are a volume on the *Latin Poets of the Decadence*, an *Abstract of the History of French Literature*, and a fuller *History of Literature*, the publication whereof occupied him during the last five years of Louis Philippe's reign. Jean-Jacques Ampère[2] also takes worthily his place among the splendid array of literary critics of the reign of Louis Philippe. Already, at an early age, he had given proofs of literary genius, worked hard at the study of English and German, and, after a long sojourn in Italy, accepted a chair of Scandinavian poetry at Marseilles, which he only occupied for a short time, and became in 1833 professor of the History of French Literature at the Collége de France. About nine years later he was elected member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres, and in 1847 member of the French Academy. He wrote several books of travel and literary essays, but is best known as an historian by his erudite *Literary History of France before the twelfth century*, to which the author of this present book is under great obligations; a *Roman History at Rome*, published in 1861, and the three following years; and *The Roman Empire at Rome*, which appeared after Ampère's death. On these and on his other works, a very able English critic remarks: "His six volumes of Roman history, while presenting a mine of knowledge from which handbook-makers will ever dig, have a flow of style seldom combined, except in the highest names, with the same depth of erudition. These, and his careful contributions to the history of various literatures, will live, while the

[1] 1806. [2] 1800-1864.

repute of his lighter works, the chief charm of which consisted in their being so like his own conversation, is already passing away with the contemporaries who enjoyed them. Tocqueville's eulogy to the Comte de Circourt on the charm of Ampère's society is significant: '*Le moindre mérite de cet auteur-là est celui d'écrire.*'"[1]

Last on our list of historians stands Alexis de Tocqueville,[2] who, at an early age, was sent with M. de Beaumont[3] to the United States, in order to study the prison-system there. On their return, they published in 1832 the result of their observations, under the title, *The Penitentiary System in the United States, and its Application to France*, which was a strong plea in favour of the cellular system as practised in Philadelphia, namely, perfect isolation of the prisoner by night as well as by day. Three years later de Tocqueville published the first part of his *Democracy in America*, of which the second part appeared in 1840. This book produced a great sensation, and founded, as it were, a new political school, having for its aim individual liberty and decentralisation. In the beginning of this work de Tocqueville investigates the mechanism of the only government which, according to him, has conciliated true liberty with true equality, to wit, the United States; whilst in the second, taking a wider range of his subject, he endeavours to discover what influence the democratic principle can have on the intellect, the feelings, and the morals; and ends by some chapters on the kind of despotism which democratic nations have to fear. He arrives at the conclusion that the future belongs to democracy, shows that the individual is isolated and helpless against the State, and that there is no other safeguard against the dangers of equality but the development of liberty, the emancipation of the commune, the formation,

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, January 1876: *The Two Ampères.*

[2] 1805-1859. [3] 1802-1866.

by election and association, of strong, powerful, and rich corporations, barriers against the oppression of the State; and finally, the freedom of the press, which is "*par excellence* the democratic instrument of liberty." What crimes might have been prevented if de Tocqueville's advice had been followed!

In 1841 de Tocqueville was chosen member of the French Academy, was several times elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies, wrote in favour of the abolition of slavery, of free-trade, and on certain other liberal projects; published in 1856 his book, *The Ancient Régime and the Revolution*, in which he clearly proved that the Revolution was prepared and caused by the state of society which preceded it, and that all the changes which are commonly said to have resulted from it—such as administrative centralisation, supremacy and tyranny of the government officers, multiplicity of offices, conscription, preponderance of Paris, and extreme subdivision of property—existed already under the ancient régime. Hence it arose, that when the two great causes of the Revolution were at work, the desire for equality and the desire for liberty, the first was easily and completely established, whilst the latter was not. De Tocqueville was at work on the other parts of his work, in which he intended to describe the consequences of the Revolution, the Empire, and Napoleon I., when he died, admired and respected by all, at the age of fifty-four.

§ 3. The Philosophers.

Let us see what share Victor Cousin[1] had in the task of inoculating his generation in the fundamental ideas of this new liberty, based upon the supremacy of reason and the independence of thought:—we may naturally expect to find the influence of the philosophical innovator greater even than that of the historical or literary innovator. Cousin, like Villemain, whose junior he was by about a year, was born at Paris, and, like Villemain, he distinguished himself in the public competitions which have done so much to nurse the genius of distinguished Frenchmen, almost before he came to man's estate, A pupil of Royer-Collard,[2] in 1810 he carried off the prize for rhetoric, and four years later was appointed *maître des conférences* in philosophy. On the death of his master, in 1815, being then only four-and-twenty years old, he succeeded to the post of professor at the Sorbonne, where for a time he did his best to strike new sparks out of the old and well-worn flints which had served the turn of Royer-Collard. German ideas, upon the introduction of Madame de Staël in the first instance, were soon added to the Scotch ideas of Reid and his school; but it is not too much to say that during the earlier years of Cousin's professorship he had no definite philosophical system to work upon. Both before and after the suspension of the Sorbonne lectures,[3] the young professor devoted much of his time to classical studies, and brought out editions of Proclus and Plato, as well as an edition of Descartes. In 1824 he passed some time in Germany; and being suspected

[1] 1791-1876.

[2] He had also studied under Maine de Biran.

[3] In 1825.

of having dealings with the secret political societies in Prussia, which were being carefully watched by the Prussian government, he was arrested and thrown into prison. His detention was not a long one ; and he brought back with him to France a distinct philological conception, as well as a certain prestige of persecution. The ideas which Cousin seems to have entertained at this period, and to which he more or less adhered throughout his life, may be sketched in a few words.

There are two general and necessary laws, comprehending all others : the law of substance and the law of causality. Even those two are but one law under different aspects ; for substance or matter is but actual causality or force, and force is but active matter. Cause is but substance revealing itself : the human mind is superior to substance—and therefore to cause. Observe the dignity accorded to humanity. A human being is a personality, exercising a free will ; capable of directing causes, because he is capable of controlling matter. Humanity is in fact deified : it is the one grand philosophical idea of the nineteenth century ; and at an interval of fifty years we can see that Victor Cousin was at least on the path which his successors have been constrained to follow. How then, and to what extent, is humanity the controlling deity of matter? and in what sense can it be admitted that human reason is itself subject to control ? Cousin asks and answers the question. The reason of the individual is fallible ; pure reason is infallible. It is not reflection, but intuition, antecedent to reflection, which lays its grasp upon essential truths, and is supreme, absolute, and above control. In these ideas we may recognise the influence of Reid as well as of Kant ; and the essential weaknesses of each are revealed in their pupil. See, only by way of illustration, how Cousin attempted to reconcile the discrepancies of the Scotchman and the German.

Speaking of the phase through which he was then passing, he says—

"More than ever faithful to the psychological method, instead of abandoning observation, I clung to it with increased force; and it is by observation that, in my innermost consciousness, to a degree to which Kant had not penetrated, under the relativity and apparent subjectivity of necessary principles, I reached and brought to light the instantaneous but real fact of the spontaneous perception of truth, a perception which, without being itself directly reflected, passes unperceived into the depths of the consciousness, but is there the true basis of that which afterwards, under a logical form and by the operation of reflection, becomes a necessary conception. All subjectivity and all relativity vanish in the spontaneity of perception. Reason becomes truly subjective by its relation to the free and will-exerting *I*, the seat and the type of all subjectivity; but in itself it is impersonal; it belongs no more to any one *I* of humanity than to any other, and its laws spring from itself alone."

Had God, then, no place in Cousin's system?—

"The God of the consciousness is not an abstract God, a solitary King relegated beyond creation to a throne of silent eternity and absolute existence, which resembles the very annihilation of existence. He is a God at once true and real, at once substance and cause, always substance and always cause—substance only in so far as He is cause, and cause only in so far as He is substance; in other words, absolute cause, one and many, eternity and time, space and number, essence and life, individuality and totality, principle, end and means, at the summit of being and at its lowest link, infinite and finite at once; threefold moreover, to wit, God, nature, and humanity."

No wonder the government of the Charter,[1] which had proclaimed a state religion, a government which clung to that religion as indissolubly associated with the principle of monarchy, and which clearly perceived—as all French mon-

[1] Of 1814.

archical governments since the Revolution have perceived—that it could continue to exist only by the stern exercise of absolute authority—had recourse to the extreme measure of suspending the lectures of a man who taught what seemed to be simple pantheism. The founder of the modern French eclectic school of philosophy seems to have taken this prohibition rather as a relief; and for a few years he paid little heed to the expostulations of his would-be disciples, who saw their master turning to the recreation of history when they would fain have heard him promulgating absolute laws. But Cousin was no dogmatist; it was indeed part of his vocation to protest against dogmatism, as being ruinous of all genuine philosophy. "The mistake of philosophy," he told his friends, in 1826,[1] "is to have considered only one side of thought, and to have seen it fully only upon this side. There is no false system, but many incomplete, true enough in themselves, but vicious in the pretence that they contain each the absolute truth, which is to be found only in them all. The incomplete, and consequently the exclusive—this is the mistake of philosophy, or, it should rather be said, of philosophers; for philosophy dominates all systems; it crosses all and rests in none. A lover of reality, it completes its picture with features borrowed from each system; for, once again, each system contains the reality within itself; but, unfortunately, it reflects it only from a single facet." The true leader of men is not less enthusiastic than his followers, though he knows how to be more patient; and if there are moments when he seems less inclined to action—whether he produces an edition of Proclus or fells trees on his private estate—it is only because he perceives that the building up of a system depends on times and opportunities, as well as on impetuosity and action. On the resumption of his lectures in 1828 and 1829, Cousin vindicated his short silence by delivering an

[1] *Philosophical Fragments.*

exhaustive criticism of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and by pushing into every age and every country his researches into the history of philosophy.

Cousin was admitted to the Academy in 1830, on the death of Fourier. In his historical studies, half biographical and half literary, he displayed a special liking for reminiscences of the seventeenth century, wherefrom he culled the memories of several of its most distinguished women—Jacqueline Pascal, the Duchess de Longueville, Madame de Sablé, Madame de Chevreuse, and Madame de Hautefort. His last works were on *French Society in the Seventeenth Century, according to the Grand Cyrus of Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, and on *The Youth of Mazarin.*

A more direct inheritor of the views of Royer-Collard was his pupil, editor and biographer, Théodore Jouffroy,[1] who, though but nineteen years old when his master died, was already known as an able dialectician, formed distinctly in the Scotch school. Jouffroy's training had been a religious one, at the same time that his father had carefully nourished him in the ideas of 1789. Born in the Franche-Comté, he came up to Paris at an early age, and at once took his place in the first rank of the class of philosophy. He not only formed a warm attachment to Royer-Collard, but also adopted from him the principles of Thomas Reid, to which he adhered for the remainder of his life. During a few years he was influenced by the ardent spirit of Victor Cousin; but in point of fact he was himself the more ardent, and by far the more adventurous thinker of the two, and Cousin's moderate eclecticism did not satisfy the impatient mind of Jouffroy. It was he who, in the columns of the *Globe*, made himself the spokesman of the advanced section of intellectual Paris, in expressing the disappointment which was felt at Victor Cousin's apparent unwillingness, in 1825, to push forward

[1] 1790-1842.

his reconnaissances into the domains of orthodoxy. Despairing of finding a leader on the path which alone, as he thought, could lead to signal triumphs, and not himself precisely of the stuff whereof intellectual leaders are made, Jouffroy fell back upon the self-contemplative and purely psychological process which his first master had enjoined. To watch the method of thought in the individual—that is, in himself—and to induce herefrom the general and necessary laws of thought: this was theoretically the position assumed by Jouffroy. Cousin's idea of a personified humanity, necessarily infallible in the aggregate, and necessarily fallible in the individual, was never sufficiently grasped by his younger friend; nor does the still more striking idea of spontaneous perception and deferred reflexion appear to have sunk into Jouffroy's mind. He sought to discover humanity in himself, as Cousin sought himself in humanity. In his preface to a translation of Stewart's *Moral Philosophy* (1826) Jouffroy explains the intellectual condition of the philosopher, as he conceived it.

"It is not enough to know how to observe; we must in addition have the courage to perceive in determined facts only that which is, and to draw from them only such inductions as rigorously follow from them; we must not keep in our heads a crowd of questions which we are impatient to solve, and which we desire to solve in a particular manner; we must not, in order to satisfy our impatience and to justify our opinion, extort from facts, by the subtlety of imagination, solutions which we require, and which they do not provide: we ought to be wise enough to understand that the best means of solving problems of fact in a solid manner is to forget these questions in the observation of facts, so that we may be able to state these impartially and completely."

It is the position, and to some extent the partial scientific method of Descartes; but at all events Jouffroy does not

approach more nearly to a practical method than did Descartes before him. Jouffroy worked in a circle, on the hither-side of a practical solution; whereas Victor Cousin founded at least a tower of observation which commanded, as he believed, a serviceable outlook over the field of humanity—a belief in which the nineteenth century has been much disposed to justify him.

Less known, perhaps, to succeeding generations than either Cousin or Jouffroy was Maine de Biran,[1] a disciple of Condillac, though with a decided tendency towards materialism. In 1805 he broke decidedly with the school in which he had been trained, and more or less heartily adopted the ideas of Royer-Collard, whom in fact he had anticipated in his objection to the views of his first teacher. Royer-Collard declared that Maine de Biran was "the master of all of us;" whilst Victor Cousin himself called him "the first metaphysician of our time." His complete works have never yet been published, and his executors have been so far unjust to him that posterity is not able to ratify of its own knowledge the high praise bestowed on him by his contemporaries.[2] He seems, however, to have taken an eager interest in the progress of the philosophical research of his age, commenting regularly upon the published opinions of the greatest thinkers of the day. His *Journal Intime* contains many acute and interesting notes on Bonald's *Philosophical Researches*, on Lamennais' *Essay on Indifference*, and on such works as those of Droz,[3] Laromiguière,[4] and Bérard.[5] Amongst the earlier French philosophers of the nineteenth century, we must not omit to take note of the bolder professors of pure materialism and systematic scepticism, the direct inheritors of Holbach and the more outspoken champions of infidelity of the

[1] 1766-1824.

[2] See Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 349.

[3] 1773-1850. [4] 1756-1837. [5] 1789-1828.

Revolution. Destutt de Tracy[1] developed Condillac in his *Elements of Ideology;* Broussais[2] violently attacked the eclectics in his essay on *Irritation and Folly;* Charles Fourier[3] advanced some crude theories, which were known by the general title of *Social Mechanics;* Saint Simon[4] set up his counter-scheme of Christianity upon the "rehabilitation of the flesh," and further developed a scheme of socialism. Shortly before his death he founded a journal called the *Producteur,* devoted to industrial topics and interests, which had amongst its earliest contributors Auguste Comte,[5] Augustin Thierry,[6] Rodrigue,[7] Enfantin,[8] and others.

[1] 1754-1836. [2] 1772-1838. [3] 1772-1837.
[4] 1760-1825. [5] 1798-1857. [6] 1795-1856.
[7] 1794-1850. [8] 1796-1864.

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1. The Novelists.

Before we pass on to consider more particularly the novel-writers of the reign of Louis Philippe, it may be well to glance at the condition of the romance during the earlier Restoration period, and up to the time when Victor Hugo, Dumas, Balzac, Soulié, Eugène Sue, occupied the first rank among French novelists. A reader of fiction in the third decade of the century would be able to turn to such works as the *Martyrs*, *René*, the *Natchez* of Chateaubriand, *Delphine* and *Corinne*, by Madame de Staël; *Adolphe*, by Benjamin Constant; the *Painter of Salzburg*, by Charles Nodier, not to mention such old and well-known tales as the *Gil Blas*, by Le Sage, *Manon Lescaut*, by the abbé Prévost, or the translations of *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Tristram Shandy*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the romances of Walter Scott, of Hoffmann, and Richter. The vapid novels and poems of d'Arlincourt were still read; and he had a host of imitators, especially women. The English Mrs. Radcliffe had numerous counterparts in France, who combined the amorous and the mysterious, the chivalric and the sombre, in a fashion much approved by the most serious division of the novel-reading public. Such were Madame de Montolieu, with her *Saint Clair of the Isles*, Madame de Saint-Surin with *Opinion and Love*, Madame Bastide with *Last Love*, Madame Voïart with *The Wife or the Six Loves*. In addition to these, and more

general in the character of their fiction, we encounter Madame de Batz with *Leopold*, Madame Barthélemy-Hadot with *Ernest de Vendôme*, Madame Guénard with *The Man with the Iron Mask*, Madame Allard de Thérase with *Gertrude*, Madame de Bou with *The Apparition*, Madame de Beaulieu with *Geneviève in the Woods*, Mademoiselle Deleyre, and a score more of ingenious but dreary feminine novelists. Of male writers (I speak of their sex rather than of their genius) another score might be named, who shone in the absence of master-hands. In the second class of novelists, but on a level inferior to that of Beyle, de Latouche, and Mérimée, I may mention Paul de Kock, whose numerous works are nearly all alike, but do not describe badly the *grisette*, as he imagined her; Horace Raisson, a *collaborateur* of Balzac in the latter's first stage; Raban, the author of *Suzette*, and Ancelot, who wrote *The Man of the World*. More than one or two of these were honoured by a seat in the Academy, though for better reason, as a rule, than could be found in their works of fiction.

The literary Renaissance of 1830 was, after the seventeenth century, the richest epoch of the history of French Literature. In variety of intellectual production, and for originality of expression, it was certainly the best. As we have already seen, history was brilliantly represented by Michelet, Louis Blanc, Guizot, Mignet; philosophy had lofty and profound expounders in Cousin, Royer-Collard, and others too numerous to name. Victor Hugo, Dumas, and others, carried the drama into spheres hitherto unknown; but no department was more remarkable for brilliancy and extent of production than the novel. After the giant Balzac, whose works were received with some of the coldness which usually greets innovators of all descriptions, came a host of adepts. It would be a thankless task to expatiate on the merits of the numerous phalanx who distinguished themselves then in the realm of fiction; some, like Alfred de Vigny, Stendhal,

and Théophile Gautier, exercised their pen on other subjects; others, like de Latouche, Madame de Girardin, and Léon Gozlan, followed in the wake of the masters. We will not attempt to assign them an order of merit; each has his own bent and peculiar style; and a comparison between geniuses so different, albeit that they have tilled the same ground, would hardly lead to satisfactory results.

In his historical romance of *Cinq Mars*, de Vigny, writing in the epoch of popular emancipation, had recourse for his subject to the epoch when royalty, having thrown off the trammels of feudalism, had begun to exercise supreme authority in France. A liberated nation, strong in its newly-acquired independence, seized with avidity on a picture which presented so striking a contrast between their present and their past. It was entirely a new *genre* of fiction which de Vigny had introduced—being himself, no doubt, under the influence of Sir Walter Scott; and he knew how to render it doubly acceptable to an audience which was, be it remembered, very different from the audience of Voltaire and Rousseau: a people in place of a class, a democracy in place of a court, greedy of new ideas, ever on the watch for something to satisfy their pride, their self-esteem, their curiosity, and not easily pleased with any writer who did not lay himself out to give them such satisfaction. De Vigny did this. He painted for them a king, Louis XIII., under the thumb of his subject Richelieu; a royal prince, Gaston d'Orléans, alternately plotting against and cringing to a haughty minister; a marshal, de Bassompierre, acting the part of a fatuous and ridiculous courtier; whilst the approaching and inevitable sovereignty of the people is skilfully foreshadowed by the author, who, respectable as was his attempt to surround his characters by local colouring and historical fact, undoubtedly has the nineteenth century more frequently before him than the seventeenth. But it is naturally in the successors of de

Vigny more than in de Vigny himself that we must look for evidence that both the writers and the readers of the new world were separated by a wide gulf of thought and experience from those who died before the Revolution. For de Vigny was not by inclination and choice, far less professedly, a member of the new school; though he was certainly allied to it by his talent and wit, and by the accident which made him an imitator of Sir Walter Scott. His *Stello,* in which he tries to prove that poets are predestined to die of hunger, and his *Tales of Military Servitude and Grandeur,* in which honour is glorified, are well written, but full of exaggeration.

There were two distinct classes of individuals by whom the new ideas of the nineteenth century were impressed upon the Frenchmen of the Restoration and the succeeding epoch; first the historians, philosophers, scholars, and men of science, the legitimate inheritors of the eighteenth century, and who pushed forward from the point at which the Revolution had interrupted the general course of discovery and criticism; next the poets, the novelists, the dramatists, the men of imagination, children of reaction rather than of study, who wrote for the heart rather than for the head, who recognised the need of the multitude for amusement, whose fancy ran riot in the freedom of humanity and of human thought. Of these latter, the novelists were the most characteristic, the most brilliant, perhaps the most original; and of the novelists none was more genuinely a type of the romantic school than Prosper Mérimée.[1] Born at Paris, the son of a distinguished painter and savant, Mérimée was a man of letters from his boyhood. He was barely twenty-two when he published *The Dramas of Clara Gazul, a Spanish Actress,* which, of course, were not Spanish; and within a few years he betrayed the gradual settling of his mind in its destined groove by the production of *La Guzla, a selection of Illyrian Poetry* (1827),

[1] 1802-1873.

which were again poems from a pretended foreign source, but really written by Mérimée himself; the *Jacquerie, Scenes of Feudalism* (1828), the *Chronicle of the reign of Charles IX.* (1829), and *Mosaic*, a collection of stories (1833). In historical romance his best tale is *The Carrying of the Redoubt*, very short but very characteristic. Still more readable, more bearing the impress of the man of his age, are his sentimental romances, or rather his novels, dealing with a phase of passion bounded by the limits of a representative social circle, of which the best examples are *Colomba* and *The Etruscan Vase*. Mérimée's art consisted in his vivid colouring, which enabled him to see the contrast, the excesses, the follies of society from their most striking point of view, and to reproduce in his readers the passions which he had himself experienced only as a critic, a *littérateur*, an artist. He was a veritable cynic, of whom it has been said that the very virtues which he describes and illustrates read like vices. His style is bright, brilliant, full of variety; he is gifted with all the wit, the arch insinuation, the sybaritic delicacy, with which some Frenchmen are wont to approach a rather indelicate theme. His posthumous work, *Letters to an Unknown Lady*, bears ample proof of this.

Less brilliant, less polished in form, but more acute and infinitely more profound than Mérimée, was Henri Beyle,[1] who wrote under the name of de Stendhal, the predecessor, the master, and the friend of the author of *Colomba*. Balzac has described him as "one of the most remarkable writers of our times;" he might have said one of the greatest, if Beyle had not wasted his powers in dilettantism. Thus he wrote two novels of surprising depth and analytic power—*La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Rouge et Noir*—the former of which, said again Balzac, was one of the finest ever written. Stendhal composed a series of tales of perfect symmetry, like *The Abbess of*

[1] 1783-1842.

Castro; he wrote at different periods of his life exquisite estimates on Art and Music; and his treatise on *Love* is unique; but in each of these several paths he stopped on the way, disgusted or idle, and declined to confirm the favourable verdict passed upon him by the most eminent critics. Like others as sensitive as he, he became a species of cynical Alceste; men pleased him not, nor women either; and he did not spare them his sarcasms. But Beyle was really a man of kindly disposition, of principle, and of honour; and sarcasm wounded him far more cruelly than others. An actor cannot long perform parts which he really feels every time he assumes them; nor can an author scrutinise the actions of men, if he wishes to live, unless he does so with the inherent callousness which the giants of literature must possess who desire to probe human wounds without danger to themselves. Beyle died young, and he was the victim of his talent. It may be casually observed that he was one of the best English scholars of his time; he could write and speak English fluently, and for a long time he contributed to *Colburn's Magazine.*

H. de Latouche,[1] the author of sundry spirited though somewhat old-fashioned novels, amongst which *Fragoletta* may be mentioned as the best, was another of the young school of French novelists which distinguished the later Restoration period; but he is said to have expended the essence of his talent in conversation; and his name has already faded in the recollection of Frenchmen.

We have now arrived at Dumas,[2] the great Dumas, as it has pleased some to call him. His wonderful powers of production, his absence of scruple in taking other men's ideas and in clothing them in garments of his own, his boldness of pen, and his adventurous turn of mind, made him many enemies and detractors, but a still greater number of admirers.

[1] 1785-1851 [2] 1803-1870.

Did he deserve severe censure? Was his immense popularity entirely justified? To each question a negative may be unhesitatingly answered. In his own peculiar style, in the impetuous flow of animal spirits which renders his productions in fiction so continuously attractive, Alexandre Dumas had no rival, nor can the charges of plagiarism, brought chiefly by a scandalous libelmonger who made a living of his craft, destroy a single one of his titles as one of the first novelists of the present age. It has been alleged, with a certain amount of truth, that more than one youthful author helped him in the concoction of those voluminous romances which are numerous and bulky enough to fill a whole library. Even admitting that this is true, it is obvious that the fertile novelist retouched these foreign elements so completely as to make them his own. None of those who have been pointed out as the anonymous fellow-workers of Alexandre Dumas ever produced anything worthy of special mark under their own names. What has been said in these pages of the author of *Gil Blas* may be repeated with regard to the writer of *Monte Christo;* few individualities were more marked and more sterlingly original than his.

Alexandre Dumas was born at Villers-Cotterets, a short distance from Paris, on the 24th of July 1803. He received no education worth speaking of—grew, in fact, without tuition or care, like a lusty young oak abandoned to its luxuriant virginity of growth. The name of Dumas, which he assumed at a later period of his literary career, was his grandmother's; his own name was Davy de la Pailleterie. In the time of Louis XVI. the Marquis de la Pailleterie went to the Antilles, and had there a son by an African negress. This son was to be the father of Alexandre. He was one of the most brilliant officers of Napoleon the First, and was celebrated in the whole army for his bodily strength and extra-

ordinary daring. Alexandre was only four years old when his mulatto father died. He had inherited the latter's physical strength; but that was almost all that he derived from the paternal inheritance. The state of poverty in which his mother was compelled to vegetate ever afterwards accounts for his deficient education. General Dumas had left debts, and when Alexandre approached his twentieth year, Madame Dumas resolved to pay them out of her slender annuity. The result was that the young man courageously set out for Paris in quest of a living for his mother and himself. After much trouble he obtained a small berth as clerk in the duke of Orleans' household, and remained affectionately attached to the family for the remainder of his life. From the first he had been conscious of his own literary instincts, but his mind was so uncultivated that he had to employ his leisure hours in laborious self-instruction. His mental energy, coupled with his physical vigour, carried him through this difficult stage of his career, in which not many could have been conquerors. This singular compound of mental and bodily energy was always the chief characteristic of Alexandre Dumas' talent. To use a somewhat trite simile, he was as an athlete who can hold a great weight at arm's length for hours without betraying the slightest symptoms of fatigue. Dumas produced a great deal before he ventured to launch out into print, wrote verses by the yard, comedies and tragedies by the dozen, and stories by the gross; but he had the good sense, rare in a young author, to consign two-thirds of this literary work to the flames. He improved so much that his drama of *Henri III.* was performed at the Théâtre-Français with unprecedented success. This, doubtless, was the cause which induced him to devote the next ten years of his literary existence to dramatic writing; and the talent of Alexandre Dumas was so many-sided that he, perhaps, had no idea of taking to fiction until chance accidentally led

him to this new ground. It was only towards 1840 that he revealed his qualifications as a novelist. Attention was first centred upon his *Travelling Impressions*, wherein truth, wit, and harmless mendacity are so cleverly blended, that the mendacity is forgotten in favour of the wit. These were quickly followed by *The Three Musketeers*, the one of Alexandre Dumas' novels which is probably destined to outlive all the others. This work, within certain limits, may be described as a masterpiece. That the author strongly inspired himself with the creations of Walter Scott is obvious, but Alexandre Dumas made the most of Walter Scott, as a pupil profits by the lessons of a master. *The Three Musketeers* contains only one type, d'Artagnan, but he is too true not to remain. The success of *The Three Musketeers* was transcended by that of *Monte Christo*, superior to the first novel in invention and interest, but considerably below it as a work of art. Dumas remained nearly up to his death, which occurred in 1870, the most popular, as well as the most productive, of French novelists. He continued *The Three Musketeers*, wrote story after story with incredible rapidity, and whether in *Queen Margot*, the *Quarante-Cinq*, *Diane de Poitiers*, and the endless succession of historical novels that issued from his pen, or in *Diane de Clèves* and *Ange Pitou*, his qualities were seldom at fault. These qualities we may resume in a few phrases: for brilliancy of improvisation, for ingenuity of invention, Alexandre Dumas has no equal. Certain authors tire their readers by a lack of vivacity; it may almost be said of Dumas that he fatigues by a too continual overflow of buoyant spirits. Sainte-Beuve, that fastidious annalist of intellectual essence, went perhaps a little beyond the mark when he said "that the *verve* of Dumas seemed to him something like a perpetual bachelor's dinner;"[1] but the comparison is not quite uncalled for. Superabundance of imagi-

[1] *Chroniques Parisiennes*, edited by Jules Troubat.

nation can, however, hardly be described as a defect. If it be added that Dumas' style is always clear, correct, and idiomatic, even in its lowest flights, it will be understood why the author of *Monte Christo* left in modern French literature a place which has not yet been filled.

George Sand,[1] a woman of talent who has immortalised her *nom de plume* by so many admirable tales of passion, joy, and grief, is a writer as different from the dashing Dumas as is well possible. Her works were more thoughtful, concentrated, and meditative; she wished to write with a loftier object than that of merely amusing. She was one of those pioneers of literature who strive to enshrine a moral teaching within the compass of a story or a poem. She had a high sense of her duties as a novelist; and this very sense led her at times astray. George Sand, in her own sphere the rival of Balzac, described men as they should be, just as Balzac described them as they are. These two classifications, indeed, represented the two great schools of modern French fiction. The question has often been mooted, Which of these systems was the true one? To provoke such a discussion is to turn round a circle; Balzac was right and George Sand was not wrong. To proceed after the manner of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* demands keener study and a callous impartiality in describing both virtue and vice; to follow George Sand requires a large and settled faith in the perfectibility of humankind. Neither Balzac nor George Sand, we may observe, strictly adhered to their theory of fiction; Madame de Mortsauf, that melancholy heroine of *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, whose history of suffering and penance few Frenchmen have read without shedding tears, is an ideal figure in the strictest sense of the term; and some of George Sand's rustic personages are eminently real. Thus both great novelists have transgressed upon each other's

[1] 1804-1876.

ground, and shown how hazardous it is to assign bounds to fiction. But each genius has its own peculiar bent, and the tendency of George Sand's was idealistic. Like Dumas, she was of aristocratic descent. Aurore Dupin (George Sand), born in 1803, was, on the paternal side, grand-daughter of M. Dupin de Franceuil, farmer-general, an intimate friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose name has been transmitted to us in the pages of the *Confessions*. By her mother she was grand-daughter of Marshal de Saxe, and thereby connected with the Bourbon family. Imbued from childhood with the sentimental socialism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, her sensitive dispositions increased as she grew, and at one time the precocious development of her intellect endangered her mind and her body. She seemed to have been created to prove that genius cannot always abide by the tenets and dictates of ordinary life, especially when it is given to woman. She has related her social vicissitudes in an autobiography written with great simplicity and good taste.[1] George Sand married, but, although the feeling of maternity was strongly developed in her, she could not put up with absolute domestication. Her differences with her husband appear to have been the first reason which led her to write; and naturally her earliest production, *Indiana*, dwelt upon the shoals of married life. It has been erroneously said that in this work and other kindred productions George Sand attacked the institution of marriage. There is no doubt that she criticised with a good deal of energy what appeared to her the defects of the marriage contract, such as it is understood in France; and many others have done so without incurring reprimand. But it was too complacently believed that Madame Sand was merely attempting to plead her own cause, when in reality she was opening a discussion of grave import concerning a question upon which much yet remains to be said.

[1] *Histoire de ma Vie*, par George Sand.

In appearing before the public, Aurore Dupin had borrowed part of the name of a young author, Jules Sandeau, who afterwards acquired fame on his own account. Under the pseudonym of George Sand, *Valentine* quickly followed *Indiana*, and the celebrity of the new female author soon spread in France with great rapidity, as her style, virile and beautifully pure, contained none of the exaggerations and emphatic figures of speech that characterise some writers of that sex when they first use the pen. Surrounded by novelists of marked individuality, she showed the fine quality of her imaginative faculties by remaining wholly herself. From the very first she attained that majestic harmony of language and exactness of expression in which she may be said to be without equal amongst modern French writers. At the same time, it is certain that George Sand's ideas were, at different stages of her literary life, under various influences. Thus she wrote some of her social novels when imbued with the theories of Pierre Leroux; *Lelia*, that curious rhapsody in which the discouragement of an ardent soul is expressed in really powerful accents, resulted from her intercourse with Alfred de Musset; and *Mauprat*, one of her most thoughtful and dramatic stories, was composed under the political influence of one of the most eloquent of French advocates, Michel de Bourges. A disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, George Sand had inherited his antipathy for certain fundamental customs of society; but on the whole, her attacks, direct and persistent as they were, had no tinge of inherent bitterness. She was often carried away by her generous impulses and noble instincts; and the otherwise charming stories of *Simon, le Meunier d'Angibault, Le Peché de M. Antoine*, were not free of paradox; but, at all events, it may be said of those of George Sand's works that excited controversy, that they never fostered morbid feelings, bitterness, or envy.

The novels we have quoted, amongst which there are two

or three real masterpieces, would alone carry the name of George Sand to posterity. In the latter part of her life, however, she gave signs of a new phase in her talent which is not the least brilliant. Town life wearied her; she had retired to her country seat in Berry, and she visited Paris but seldom. It was at Nohant that she wrote that delightful series of pastoral novels which commences with *La Mare au Diable*, and finishes by *Les Maitres Sonneurs*. In these gems of modern fiction, social grievances and declamations were dismissed; the author of *Consuelo* was amongst the peasants; and the language she made them speak, the simple and touching dramas in which she made them take part, the delicate manner in which she described the simplicity of rustic life, begot universal praise and admiration. From a purely artistic point of view these productions of her after-life are the most perfect. More recently George Sand returned to the depicting of social enigmas. She was an indefatigable worker; and if *Jean de la Roche*, *Le Marquis de Villemer*, *Césarine Dietrich*, have not pleased as much as *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré*, the productions of her old age were worthy of her talent. Within a few days of her death, George Sand contributed some pretty tales to the *Revue des deux Mondes;* and so brilliant were the last rays of her splendid decline, that the demise of one who had been writing for full fifty years was regarded as a calamity to French literature.

Contemporary with George Sand and Balzac was a man of subtle wit, of a fastidious and delicate turn of mind, who to the misfortune of literature was carried away in the flower of age, and whose works are all but forgotten, save by a few critics, who enjoy a perfume the more as it is sought by few. Charles de Bernard du Grail,[1] born at Besançon in 1805, has written two works, *Gerfaut*

[1] 1805-1850.

and *Le Gentilhomme Campagnard*, that deserve to remain as models of fiction. Of all French novelists of the literary movement of 1830, Charles de Bernard was the one whom Thackeray professed to admire as a model. Between Thackeray and Bernard there are indeed many affinities. In both we find the same quiet, yet withal incisive, humour, the same delicacy of appreciation, and, it may be added, the same aversion for the uglier sides of human nature. Whilst leaving a broad margin for vice and wickedness, Charles de Bernard believed in the eventual triumph of what is good and pure in this world, and he preferred to leave vice in the dark, and bring forth virtue in full light, or to use the former as a background for the latter. Besides his more serious works, he wrote a number of tales which are only to be compared with those of Prosper Mérimée for their exquisite proportion and nervous precision of style. *La Peau du Lion* is almost as good as *Colomba*, and *Un Homme sérieux* is a delightful satire framed in a story taken from the life, which, for originality of conception and treatment, is almost without parallel. A time may come when the public, eschewing the morbid productions of a school that takes realism for reality, will, by returning to such works as those of Charles de Bernard, indicate the bounds which novelists should abstain from transgressing. Bernard died in 1850.

In Frederic Soulié[1] French fiction had an exponent who, possessing all the essential qualities of a master, failed to obtain a place beside George Sand and Dumas. If it were enough for a writer to produce one single perfect work, Soulié should be a great novelist, for *Le Lion Amoureux*, a story of the highest dramatic bent, made up of the simplest incidents of life, can be read and re-read. Having failed in writing for the stage, Soulié, whose aspirations, however, were rather poetical, devoted himself to fiction. He wrote this all his life, and the

[1] 1800-1847.

consciousness of having stifled his real talent only to court success and popularity threw a veil of melancholy over the whole of his writings, and inspired most of them with a kind of desponding sarcasm of which he could never completely divest himself. *Les Mémoires du Diable* is in many points worthy of Balzac; it teems with insights into the human heart, and some of its humorous satires are cruelly true; however, an innate morbidness prevails throughout the brightest pages of this remarkable work. The same may be said of Soulié's other productions; they are numerous and of very unequal merit; and as they almost without exception dwell upon movement and melodrama rather than delineation of character, few, beyond *Le Lion Amoureux* and *Les Mémoires du Diable,* will be remembered.

Opinions may vary upon the nature of such works as *The Mysteries of Paris* and *The Wandering Jew;* but there can be but one opinion with regard to the author's rare power of invention. And as Eugène Sue[1] was one of the men of his time who engrossed the largest share of public attention, his place is necessarily marked amongst those of leading novelists. Eugène Sue was about the same age as Fréderic Soulié; he issued from an illustrious race of surgeons, and himself began life as a doctor. He gave up that profession at the death of his father, and after spending the greater portion of a considerable fortune in amusements, he tried writing. His beginnings were hardly encouraging; his maritime stories were not always interesting, and, moreover, he had to contend with formidable rivals; but the success of Dumas and the popularity of George Sand were as nothing compared with the immense hit made by *Les Mystères de Paris* when that voluminous work came to light. This doubtless led Eugène Sue definitely to select social monstrosities as the elements of his later works. *The*

[1] 1804-1857.

Mysteries of Paris is a story of literary coarseness, and of extraordinary invention, which is calculated to disgust as much as it interests. The personages of this sinister novel are chosen from the lowest dregs of society, and in the author's powerful hands they enact a hideous drama. Vice is exhibited under such hopelessly horrible colours that the reader puts down the book with a despondent view of humanity. On the whole, Eugène Sue only contributed to the amusement of the masses. *The Wandering Jew, Mathilde,* and the other numerous works which the author rapidly produced, conduced to the same result. Alexandre Dumas catered for public amusement, but his literary food was healthy. The writings of Sue are exactly the reverse: one cannot read him without admiring his marvellous gifts of imagination; but one feels that the world could have gone on without him. Eugène Sue died in 1857. Sainte-Beuve has branded him as the de Sade of modern fiction. This is an exaggeration; but if his pen was responsible for little harm, it did no good.

Of Victor Hugo's earliest romances, *Bug Jargal* and *Han d'Islande,* we have already said something; in reality they were little more than the promising, but uncouth, manifestations of one of the loftiest geniuses of the age. Besides, they were penned by a boy hardly out of his teens. But at the beginning of Louis Philippe's reign, Hugo had already earned his place amongst the leading writers of French romance by his *Last Days of a Condemned Man* (1829), and *Notre Dame de Paris.* Subsequently Victor Hugo acquired more substantial titles to the name of novelist, but neither the first nor the second of the two works I have just mentioned can properly speaking be styled novels. The *Last Days of a Condemned Man* is an eloquent and fervid attack upon capital punishment, couched in anything but romantic terms. Claude Gueux, the "condemned," is not a character of fiction; the author

has given a name and an individuality to an instance of the case; he quotes nothing more. As to *Notre Dame de Paris*, it is no doubt a powerful book, magnificent in style, full of cleverness, learning, descriptive power, and poetic inspiration. Gringoire, the cynical philosopher, is drawn with a masterly hand; no one but a deep thinker and a true poet could have described the dark, sinister priest, Claude Frollo, and imagined the creation of bewitching Esmeralda. The main idea of the work, too, is generous, particularly on the part of a poet who must naturally have a feeling of horror for monsters and monstrosities; it is a rehabilitation of physical ugliness and intellectual stagnation. Quasimodo, the sexton of Notre Dame, is an incarnation of both; his mind is as deformed as his body; and still the poet raises him higher than the towers of the famous cathedral, by showing him in love with a creature as fair as he is ugly. Nevertheless neither *Notre Dame de Paris* nor *Claude Gueux* are novels in the sense we usually attach to the word. Victor Hugo's later productions in fiction, although always embodying a leading purpose on the part of the author, had less of romantic disquisition on all subjects than this remarkable work.

I have just said that Victor Hugo attempted to rehabilitate moral and physical deformity by Love. In *Notre Dame de Paris* a man is the subject of his special pleading; we shall see him, in the drama, undertaking a similar task for a woman. His other novels, written after 1848, do not belong to the period we are dealing with.

§ 2. The Human Comedy.

If I have passed lightly over the romance-writers and novelists hitherto enumerated—of whom some exacted little attention, whilst some have rendered themselves equally famous as poets or dramatists—it was in order that we might take a more leisurely review of the life and works of Honoré de Balzac,[1] the prince of French novelists, who is in himself the epitome of his class, if not the greatest modern exponent of human nature through the medium of prose fiction. Born at Tours in the last year of the eighteenth century, Balzac received his earlier education at the college of Vendôme, giving little evidence of the special talent which he was hereafter to display. His story of *Louis Lambert* preserves many reminiscences of his school days. In his fifteenth year his father went to reside in Paris, and the future novelist was trained for the profession of the law. In due course he took his degree, completed his legal studies, and entered successively the office of an *avoué* and of a notary. But the career which his father had chosen for him, and of the commencement of which more than one episode is preserved in the stories of *César Birotteau* and *The Interdict*, was not congenial to the young Honoré. He read works of fiction and the drama at every available opportunity—Rabelais a dozen times over—and made no secret of his desire to be an author, undeterred by the ridicule and the threats of his father. At the age of twenty the disagreement resulted in his leaving the house of his unbending parent; Balzac took a room in the Rue des Lesdiguières, close to the library of the Arsenal, where he passed most of his time. Barely supporting himself, he contrived at last to write a

[1] 1799-1850.

tragedy, *Henrietta of England,* which he submitted to his former teacher, M. Andrieux, afterwards perpetual secretary of the Academy. The judge whom he had selected advised him to throw the miserable attempt—for such no doubt it was—into the fire. Balzac accepted the rebuff, went back to his poverty and his labour, ate little, thought, read, walked, and worked much, until at last his father relented and supplied him with the means of pursuing his chosen vocation more at his ease. From about the year 1822 Balzac had discovered the true bent of his genius, and begun to produce stories by the dozen. In a few years he had written as many as forty, which he issued under the assumed names of Viellerglé, Lord R'hoone—an anagram of Honoré—and Horace Saint-Aubin, and for which he received the most pitiable doles of money. The first novel procured him ten pounds, and the price rose gradually to as much as sixty pounds, which he usually anticipated in the shape of bills, thus considerably reducing his emoluments. With some of the money thus earned he was imprudent enough to bring out an edition of La Fontaine and Molière in one volume; and that at once put him behind the world to the tune of six hundred pounds. Another speculation, the opening and subsequent sale of a printing-office and type-foundry, added only to his difficulties.

The Last Chouan (1827) was the earliest work of Balzac which he published with his own name on the title-page. In a few years Honoré de Balzac was a household word in France, and in Paris especially, whose life he had shown himself able to photograph with so much fidelity, and to surround with such a brilliant halo. It was about this time that the young novelist was introduced by his publisher to M. Emile de Girardin, in whose paper, *la Mode,* Balzac, then known only in the narrow circle of his intimate friends, wrote a tale, *El Verdugo* (*the Executioner*). Some time after, about the end of 1829, or in 1830, M. de Girardin conceived the idea of

publishing, as an addition to a daily paper, a biographical supplement, and Balzac was one of its most active contributors; but this journal lived only a few months. *The Philosophy of Marriage,* the *Bal de Sceaux, Gobseck, A Double Family,* were amongst the productions of this period of Balzac's career. Meanwhile our author was still poor, still fettered by the results of his earlier speculations; and in order to liberate himself he engaged in new ones. Thus, having conceived the idea that the old Roman mines of Sardinia were still capable of yielding mineral treasures, he went off one fine morning with five hundred francs in his purse, to turn his notion into gold. On the way he unfortunately enlarged upon his plan to a fellow-passenger, a Genoese; and, after breaking his journey at Corsica, he arrived in Sardinia only to find that his travelling-companion had anticipated him, and was already turning the enterprise to good account. In 1833 he undertook a journey to Switzerland, where he remained some time at Pré-l'Evêque, near Geneva, and afterwards went to Italy to see Lake Maggiore. In this and the following year he produced *Eugénie Grandet* and *le Père Goriot,* two of the most characteristic, the most quaint, and the most remarkable, of his novels. His genius and his popularity were now at their highest. Whatever else he was destined to do, he could scarcely produce anything more incontestably grand and artistic. In 1834 Balzac, who always hankered after proprietorship in some form or another, bought the *Chronique de Paris,* then under the management of a Mr. Duckett, an Englishman. In the columns of this newspaper Balzac introduced Théophile Gautier, at this time twenty-four years of age, whose merits the novelist was one of the first to recognise. Amongst his other friends were Jules Sandeau, the companion of the eccentric and highly talented lady whom we have already mentioned, and who adopted and rendered famous the literary pseudonym of George Sand.

Balzac's activity was immense. He has left behind him a curious classification of his principal works of fiction, to the number of one hundred and thirty-eight; though some thirty of these exist by their titles alone, their projector having died before he could elaborate the plots which he had doubtless conceived in every instance. His "Catalogue of works to be contained in the Human Comedy" is divided into three parts; 1*st*, "Studies of Manners," subdivided into six books: Scenes of private life, of provincial life, of Parisian life, of political life, of military life, and of country life; 2*d*, "Philosophical Studies;" and 3*d*, "Analytical Studies."

A list of works written by Balzac, year by year, would illustrate more clearly than anything his unflagging energy and great fertility.[1] His pen was rarely idle for a single day. He left behind him five dramas:—*Vautrin, The Resources of Quinola, Pamela Giraud, The Stepmother*, and *Mercadet;* lives of La Fontaine and Molière, a *Monograph on the Parisian Press,* essays and letters innumerable, not to mention frequent contributions to many newspapers. His works went through many editions in his lifetime, and earned for their author a considerable sum of money. His love of spending was as great as his love of earning. He bought house after house, each one grander than the last, and entertained his many friends right royally. Much also was spent in travel, of which Balzac was particularly fond. From 1833 to 1840 he travelled almost continually, writing as he moved from place to place. In several of the French provinces, in Germany, Italy, Prussia, Austria, Russia, he combined relaxation with

[1] Let us be content with an enumeration of the labours of 1832: *The Calvinist Martyr, The Message, The Unknown Masterpiece, Colonel Chabert, The Curé of Tours, The Exchange, Louis Lambert, The Forsaken Wife, The Grenadière, The Famous Gaudissart, The Maranas, A Passion in the Desert, The Hundred Droll Stories* (the first ten), *Two Tales, A Conversation between Eleven o'Clock and Midnight*, and *The Spanish Grandee.* All these works of fiction were independent of Balzac's other labours.

hard work, and sought day by day for new experiences. From 1843 to 1847 he took up his residence at Passy ; but in the latter year he set out on a second voyage to Russia. Here he was attacked by a distressing weakness of the heart, and was advised to return to Paris. He reached the capital on the 23d of February, and the very next day the revolution of 1848 broke out. In 1849 Balzac went to Russia for the third time ; and in March of the same year he married there the Countess de Hanska, a wealthy widow. Four months later he returned to Paris ; and there, at the age of fifty-one, he died of the malady, which was due, no doubt, as much to his incessant labour at the desk as to any other cause.

The genius of Balzac is not to be discussed in a dozen or score of paragraphs ; the task would be as hopeless for him who attempted it as it would be ineffectual for his readers. Rising from a reperusal of three or four of his most characteristic works, one is impressed by a sense of the futility of seeking to convey to others the manifold effects produced upon one's sensibility and one's judgment. Scarcely any French writer so thoroughly defies the effort to classify his talent and to catalogue his virtues and his faults. Yet one thing may be said, which seems in itself to comprise or imply all the rest ; although it is true that this "rest" can be felt and understood only by the man who has read at least a dozen of Balzac's masterpieces. The author of the *Human Comedy*—which is, with at least equal truth, a human tragedy —is the anatomist of passion, the vivisector of the human heart. Nothing better expresses the peculiarity of his talent, which is occupied wholly with humanity. The feelings of his fellow-men, but especially of his women, are for Balzac what their bodies are for the physiologist. His pen is his scalpel, and it is ever in his hand. He dissects, he fills his laboratory with preparations ; but he leaves to others the task of ticketing and of lecturing upon the results of his

dexterity. There have been novelists, like Dickens, who were quite as close observers of their kind; but they keep to the surface where Balzac cuts deep into the tissues of his subject—they are mere surgeons and apothecaries where Balzac is a vivisector. There have been other novelists who have taken the useful or the beautiful for their guide; but for Balzac passion is the matter and the mode of his art. "Passion," he says himself, "is the whole of humanity; without it, religion, history, romance, art, would be useless." Rousseau also had made passion his theme and his subject-matter; but he was content to study it in his own nature, whilst Balzac sets no limit to the fields of his operations. He does not accept an epitome, he is scarcely satisfied even with a type; he simply passes from example to example, never dreaming that he has established a physiological truth, never resting from the repetition of his demonstrations until death snatches the knife from his hands.

For the rest, let us arrive at the genius of Balzac by studying one or two of his works; and first of all the master-key of his system, in so far as he can be said to have had a system—*The Physiology of Marriage*, written at leisure during six years.[1] In more than one sense this book reveals the spirit and the tendency of its author's mind, and might naturally serve as the introduction and the explanation of his *Human Comedy*. With the true spirit of a Pantagruelist he sees a tragedy, identical, or at least conterminous with human existence; he is penetrated by it, he becomes the seer and the prophet of a new revelation; and, far from raising the cry of a Jeremiah, or a John in the wilderness, he proclaims to his generation and to posterity a gigantic comedy. He has been on the point of weeping at the thought of all that is implied in the central social bond, at the almost inevitable desecration of the holiest sacrament of human religion; and by way of

[1] 1824-1829.

impressing the sad truth which he so clearly realises upon the souls of his fellow-men, he prepares to make them laugh, devoting himself to this vocation for the remainder of his existence. Undoubtedly it was as a vocation high and serious that Balzac regarded his authorship. He was no mere writer of romances by force of habit, or for gain alone. Consciously or unconsciously, he was a great teacher. An anatomist of vice rather than of virtue, surrounding vice with all the allurements of art and voluptuousness, rarely moralising, almost always laughing, employing all his resources to produce a scene of exquisite comedy, in which infamy of some kind is invariably the central idea of his plot, he is still none the less a moralist in effect and by his philosophic design; his lightest creations are more properly lessons than novels. To one who had read nothing of Balzac except his *Droll Tales*, this might seem a bold assertion; but I advance its truth only upon the aggregate of all his works, and I anticipate that I shall do much to prove it by considering the ideas embraced in *The Physiology of Marriage.*

Of all the phenomena which presented themselves to Balzac's mind, from boyhood upwards, the one which appears to have struck him most forcibly was woman. That which is to some of us an enigma, a toy, a victim, an idol, was to Balzac the be-all and end-all of humanity; and it became, as a consequence, the theme and the focus of his labours. Marriage, its laws, their effect and their violation—this was the science to which he consecrated all his talent and all his energies, and to the physiology of which he devoted the thoughts of six of the best years of his life. "How many men," he says in one place, "get married without knowing what a woman is. . . . There are men who are children all their lives, who quit life empty handed, having vegetated, after speaking about love and pleasure as slaves speak of liberty." Balzac, we have seen, was fifty years old before he

took a wife, but he was not twenty when he was deeply immersed in the study of his engrossing subject, and when he was already in a position to say something. From his very law-books he derived suggestions and stimulants to his genius. He tells us of the feelings excited in his mind when his eyes fell upon the word "adultery." "Immense in the code, never did this word present itself to my imagination without drawing behind it a melancholy procession of ideas: tears, shame, hatred, terror, secret crimes, bloody wars, families without a head, were personified before me, and started up suddenly when I read the sacramental word Adultery." His talent had, in fact, received its bent; his *Human Comedy* existed in his brain before he had written a word of it; and with the mantle of Rabelais upon his shoulders he sat down to his *Physiology of Marriage; or, A Meditation of Eclectic Philosophy upon Conjugal Happiness and Unhappiness; published by a young bachelor.* His motto—"Happiness is the end which all societies ought to set before them"—was chosen in all seriousness; and it might stand at the head of almost every work of Balzac.

The Physiology of Marriage was published without the author's name; but it reached a second edition within a year. It was fully criticised, and for the most part adversely, even during the great increase of liberty secured by the press in 1830. Jules Janin, writing in the *Journal des Debats,* after admitting that the book "might be read from beginning to end without great effort," and praising it with faint condemnation by declaring that it failed from "being too complete," ended by flatly stigmatising it as "infernal." Janin would not have written this word thirty years later, but we cannot wonder if he did not understand the book on a first reading, or apart from the novels which followed, illustrated, and justified it. Balzac himself recognised by instinct the value of what he was writing. Above all he felt that, if *The Physio-*

logy of Marriage was a failure, if it so much as contained what he did not intend to say, or omitted what he intended, his whole notion of humanity would be belied, and his every claim to philosophic insight would be extinguished. Young as he was, he had pursued his labours on a sound system, and had spared no pains to arrive at sound inductions. He spent months and years over the physiology of the brain, before he attacked the physiology of humanity. He had thumbed the books of his predecessors, he had exflagitated the souls of women and of men. As soon as he perceived that his mind contained what he wished to utter, he permitted nothing to intervene between himself and his work. Let us take his own picture of the labour of a conscientious author, travailing with a production by which he knew that he must eventually stand or fall. He wrote to M. Levavasseur, who was producing the work, as follows :—

"My poor unfortunate publisher, the most lovely girl in the world can only give what she has. I work all day at the *Physiology*. I give but six hours a night to the scenes of which I have only to correct the proofs to set my conscience free. I am quite ready to send my copy necessary to finish on the 15th, if you wish it ; but it would be the most odious murder that we have ever committed on a book. There is something in me which prevents my doing ill with a good conscience. It is a question of giving the book a future. . . . If . . . I were to potter about, if I were to write prospectuses, mend old shoes, if I played billiards, if I drank and ate, and so forth—but I have not one idea, I do not take one step outside the *Physiology;* I dream of it, I do nothing else. I am smitten with it. . . . The author of that work is between success and the scaffold at every line. I never so well understood its importance. I wanted to make a jest, and you came one morning and asked me to do in three months what Brillat-Savarin[1] took ten years to do. He spoke merely of good living, and I speak of the most serious matter in

[1] Brillat-Savarin was the author of a *Physiology of Taste.*

France. He had a new topic, and I the most threadbare topic in the world. There is a miracle in it, whereof I will boast; namely, that the first volume of the *Physiology* was recast in its present form between the 1st of September and the 10th of November 1829; for on the tenth the *ite missa est* of the first volume will be said. Don't think that this letter is an excuse. I work as ardently and as consecutively as any human creature can. But I am only the most humble servant of the Muse, and that hussey has her moments of humour. Don't despair, for on the 15th I will frankly tell you on what you may rely. Only then shall I have fathomed the extent of the mischief in the second volume."

Judge from this the character of all Balzac's work; for with him it was a question of something more than the entertainment of his readers and his own personal profit.

The *Physiology* is written as though it were a constitutional and military history of a State—which, in fact, it is. The headings of the chapters carry out this idea: "A Treatise on Marital Politics—Customs—Essay on the Police—The Budget—Civil War—Of Allies—Conjugal Peace—Principles of Strategy—Manifestos," and the like. These "Meditations," as the author calls them, are all in the Pantagruelistic style—to wit, no style at all; but in the midst of theories and paradoxes, of tortuous arguments and quaint axioms, of inconsequent digressions and absurd commentaries, we find the profoundest reflections and the most earnest and lofty ideas. Every page abounds in this medley of the serious and the ridiculous. Let us take a few examples at random. We read in the meditation on "First Symptoms:"—

"Sometimes your wife suddenly displays an extreme tenderness, as though repenting of her thoughts and her projects; sometimes she is moody and inexplicable; in short, she fulfils the *varium et mutabile femina* which we have at times had the folly to attribute to their constitution."[1]

[1] *Meditation II.*

And again :

"These symptoms, light as a vapour, are like those clouds which barely fleck the azure of the sky, and which are called flowers of the storm. Presently the colours take deeper hues."

And again :

"When we extol those girls who can hardly be found, so happily trained by chance, so well constituted by nature, and whose delicate soul supports the rude contact of the great soul of that which we call a man, we mean to speak of those noble and rare creatures of whom Goethe has given us a model in the Clara of *Egmont;* we are thinking of those women who seek no other glory than that of well discharging their rôle; bending themselves with astonishing suppleness to the pleasure and will of those whom nature has given them for masters; alternately rising in the vast sphere of their thoughts and stooping to the simple task of amusing them like children; comprehending both the oddness of those souls so powerfully strained and their slightest words and their vaguest looks; divining, in short, that the pleasures, the ideas, and the morality of a Byron cannot be those of a haberdasher."

Or, to take something more directly in the Pantagruelistic vein :—

"The men whose nose is besmeared with snuff;

"Those who are unluckily born with an everlasting cough;

"The husbands who chew;

"The men whose shy and bilious temperament always gives them the appearance of having eaten a sour apple;

"The men who in private life have a few ridiculous habits, and who, in spite of everything, retain their dirty appearance;

"In fine, old men, who marry young women;—all these folk are especially predestinated!"

It is impossible to draw a parallel between Balzac as a novelist and any English novelist; or, at all events,

the parallel would be neither close nor far extended. In England there have been writers of fiction who have invariably taken love for their theme; writers whose specialty was to contrast pure domestic love with illicit passion; writers who have studied and illustrated the physiology of marriage, and the association of two hearts without marriage; writers who have dissected humanity with more or less of cunning and courage; writers who have wielded the pen of genuine Pantagruelism; writers who have sketched character with all the force of an intense realism, and whose brush has painted an interior with more than Dutch minuteness. There have been many-sided writers—De Foe, Sterne, Thackeray, Dickens—who have combined two or three of these characteristics, and who have raised themselves to the first rank amongst English novelists; but England has not, nor has any other nation had, a writer who united in himself to so marvellous a degree, with such creative power and such vivid originality, all those brilliant specialties of fictive genius which Balzac displayed. In the nature and the reach of his capacities he seems to me to stand easily at the head of romantic fiction, without an equal in any country or in any age. I know no one who succeeds more completely in enthralling the attention of his readers. There are, of course, hundreds who can rouse our curiosity, our interest, our admiration; but whilst Balzac does all this, and to the highest degree, he holds us at the same time intent upon the acquisition of a knowledge which we feel to be incalculably serviceable to us, which opens before us a vast field of inquiry, and tempts us with a vast promise of power—a knowledge which we have nowhere found so clearly and simply offered to our mind—the knowledge of the human heart. And not only is this knowledge set before us amidst all the allurements of engrossing plot, circumstance, episode, and commentary, but it is propounded with remarkable art.

If we are shocked at times, it is by the revelation of the truth, not by the wanton creation of the writer; if we are disgusted, it is by ourselves or by human nature, not by the outrage, the recklessness, or even the clumsiness of the artist. In their two several directions, perhaps Thackeray and Dickens, amongst English novelists of the present century, have approached nearest to the power and the manner of Balzac; but in art alone: in construction and harmony both of them remain below the standard revealed in the *Human Comedy*, even though they may be superior to it in purity of expression and in plot.

Let us do justice to the men whom we have compared, however incidentally, with Balzac. The causes of the latter's superiority are manifold, and by no means personal alone. It is true that the individual art of the Frenchman is of the highest order; but it is also true that he had a subject, or a class of subjects, which was virtually out of the reach of Englishmen, which could not be freely treated by any but a Frenchman. Not only do a more advanced laxity of public opinion and perhaps a more robust literary appreciation permit amongst our neighbours the liberal handling of scenes of passion and romance, but the condition of society provides more abundant illustrations; so that what would in England be outrageous and ludicrous exaggeration, is in France generally a more or less commonplace occurrence. And the cause of this difference, again, is not entirely a difference in the latitude with respect to the relations of the sexes allowed in the two countries. There is inherent in the French genius a conception of these relations fundamentally distinct from the conceptions entertained by any other people, which regulates society, which gives a special tone and colour to the social institutions, and which consequently dominates French fiction. The life of a woman in France is first one of comparative slavery, and next of comparative independence of control.

In England a girl enjoys most freedom before she is married; the altar once passed, everything tends to restrict her liberty, to bind her to her husband's side, to withdraw her from courtship and romance. In France the young girl is in thorough subjection to her parents, and looks forward to her marriage as a means of throwing off her restraint. Moreover, the vast majority of marriages in France are between men of mature age and young women; and as the bride has nearly always a dowry, she feels on this account also a greater independence of her husband. Courtesies to a married woman are therefore usual, and indeed expected, from the unmarried men of her acquaintance; and there is thus more temptation, not to say excuse, for the woman who is predisposed to indulge in a *liaison*. Again, the question has its physiological aspect. From various causes a French couple has, on the average, fewer children than an English or German couple, and the wife has fewer domestic cares and duties standing between herself and society. Ninety per cent of the wives who forget their husbands in France are women who, if they are mothers at all, have one, or at most two children, either put out to nurse, or kept during the greater part of the day out of their parents' sight. The domestic life in France rarely eclipses the social life; and French society is of necessity very different from English society. Climate, characteristics of race, habit, food, all combine to produce the artificial condition of things which Balzac has painted, no doubt at its worst, in such vivid and impressive colours.

No better example of Balzac, no more speaking picture of life and manners in the Paris of 1846, no more striking instance of the anatomist's knowledge of human nature in its brightest and its darkest aspects, could form the object of our attention than *La Cousine Bette*, coming under the head of "Poor Relations" in the "Scenes of Parisian Life." This

"serious and terrible study of Parisian manners," as its author rightly describes it, is one of the most characteristic and the most frightful—I can find no better word—of Balzac's romances. The undiluted realism of the story, from beginning to end, corrodes the heart; scarcely has the interest of the plot and the characters seized upon us, when we sit down fascinated, as by the eyes of a beautiful and venomous snake; we shudder, but we cannot close our eyes. Of plot, indeed, in the sense of concealed motives and suspended issues, there is scarcely any, either in this or in the other novels of Balzac.

Cousin Bette is the poor cousin of the Baroness Adeline Hulot, who has been brought up to Paris, and treated with kindness by the family of the baron, one of the heads of department in the Ministry of War. Bette (Lisbeth) supports herself by making gold lace and embroideries; but she is always welcome at Adeline's house, and is closely attached to her cousin's daughter, Hortense. When the story opens, Bette is represented as an old maid of thirty-five, somewhat hard-favoured, and more than reasonably resentful of the patronage bestowed upon her, or rather of the superior fortune of her married cousin, over whom she had tyrannised in her childhood, though she was by five years the younger of the two. She conceals her jealousy well enough, and is content to play a humble part for the sake of the definite advantage of being free of the house. Bette, however, despite her age and want of personal attractions, is in love. She lodges in a house in an unfashionable quarter of Paris; and in the room above her own lives a young Polish refugee, Count Wenceslas Steinbock, a sculptor, who has not yet asserted his claim to public recognition. Lisbeth rescues him when he is at the point of suicide, and establishes over him the sway of a gratitude which is daily increased by her rough kindnesses and wholesome stimulus to exertion. The old maid is romantic

on the subject of her *protégé;* but in an incautious outbreak she boasts of her lover to Hortense, and so piques the curiosity of that golden-haired maiden that the latter cunningly unearths the young count, flatters him, falls in love with him, and ends by stealing him away from her cousin. This is one of the sources from which the action of the story is made to spring; for Cousin Bette, robbed of her treasure, is thenceforth possessed by a demon of revenge, and devotes herself to wreaking her passion upon the whole family of Hulot.

The task is made only too easy for her. The Baron Hulot d'Ervy at the age of sixty was one of the most infatuated *roués* of Paris. "At this age love becomes a vice; insensate vanities have then part in it. Thus Adeline saw her husband become incredibly particular in his dress, dyeing his hair and whiskers, wearing belts and stays. He determined to remain good-looking at any cost. This solicitude for personal appearance, a fault which he had been wont to make the subject of satire, he pushed to an extreme." The natural consequence was that he reduced himself to poverty; and whilst Adeline strove hard to keep up appearances in the grand house which had been to her such a happy home, they were in a state of the greatest embarrassment. Lisbeth had another ally in Monsieur Crevel, a retired perfumer, with all the instincts of a tradesman still strong upon him, but with as much weakness for the fair sex as the baron. He describes himself as "a former vendor of perfumes, successor to César de Birotteau, at the Queen of the Roses, in the street Saint Honoré, formerly *adjoint* of the mayor, captain in the National Guard, knight of the Legion of Honour;" though, when his pride is especially strong upon him, he prefers to speak of himself as belonging to the "upper aristocracy, Marshal de Richelieu . . . Pompadour, Dubarry, *roué*, and whatever you can imagine of eighteenth century" style. There is this

grand distinction between Crevel and Hulot, that whilst they both pursue the same ends, and both bring ruin upon themselves by the same courses, the ex-perfumer is the fool of his inordinate vanity, and the baron of his inordinate self-indulgence. Balzac has nowhere created two more life-like characters; and nowhere has he reached a higher level of dramatic comedy than in describing the adventures of this ridiculous couple of old rakes. They are, even as much as Cousin Bette, the centre of dramatic interest in this ghastly chapter of the *Human Comedy;* and perhaps Molière himself has never produced anything more exquisite than some of the scenes in which the two besotted old men play a principal part. Hulot's son, a fine character, inheriting, like Hortense, the grandest qualities of his mother, has married Crevel's daughter, induced thereto by the reckless selfishness of his father. Crevel does not esteem his son-in-law very highly; and he owes the baron a grudge for robbing him of Josépha, the celebrated *prima donna*, whom the perfumer had in the first instance launched upon the world. This grudge he attempts to pay off by seducing the wife of his friend; but Adeline rejects him with scorn. It is then that Cousin Bette perceives a chance of entering upon the execution of her ruthless plan of revenge.

One day the baron had set his eyes upon a charming little woman, another of Lisbeth's fellow-lodgers, who turns out to be Madame Marneffe, the wife of one of his subordinates at the War-Office. Valérie Marneffe is the Circe of the story, to whom nearly every male character with whom we have to do is in turn subjected. She is the embodiment of the power of inspiring passion, and fascinates with an incarnate seductiveness. Upon her Balzac has lavished all the skill of which he is capable. The too susceptible baron had never had better excuse for his weakness than when he fell desperately in love with the little witch who was destined to plunge him

in the very depths of degradation and dishonour. As for Valérie, she had been waiting patiently for such a chance as this; and so had her despicable husband—a man whose incredible baseness is almost sufficient to sicken the reader of a story whose repulsive features already make so great a call upon his equanimity. Marneffe gives his wife *carte blanche*, and she loses no time in securing the head of her husband's office; and the baron, after raising a large sum of money at a most reckless sacrifice, duly installs his new goddess in a magnificent hôtel, wherein Marneffe accepts a comfortable suite of apartments. By this time Valérie has made a friend and confidante of Cousin Bette, and the latter consents to keep the house of the irresistible Dalila, whom she hopes to make the instrument of her revenge. Step by step the baron advances in his infatuation, pledging his means, his future, his honour, in return for the present gratification of his blind passion. Poor Adeline is almost entirely deserted, after being transferred like a chattel, and without a murmur, to a couple of rooms in an unpretentious house, where she is presently dependent for her subsistence upon the charity of her married children, and of her husband's brother. The latter, a Marshal of France, a relic of Napoleon's famous guard, an austere republican, with an insane devotion to the memory of the *petit Caporal*, is already poor through the sacrifice which he has made for his brother; and Adeline's own uncle has been even more cruelly victimised by the selfish *roué*, having consented to go to Algeria for the express purpose of diverting the national revenue into the hands of the utterly abandoned slave of Valérie's charms.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the arts which Valérie employs to draw one after another of her admirers into her net. Hulot, Crevel, Steinbock, the Brazilian Montès de Montéjanos, all are her victims, and each believes himself her favoured, if not her sole possessor. The scene in

which "the five fathers of the church," as Marneffe calls them, are gathered round the same table, four at least of them elated by the prospect of paternity held out to them by this French Calypso, is full of subtle but untranslatable comedy. She fleeces Hulot to the very skin; she robs and cheats Crevel, humouring him first through his grudge against Hulot, and next by making him think that he has touched her heart, and eventually marrying him for his wealth and position; she plunders Montès, plays fast and loose with him, grossly deceives him, until a terrible punishment overtakes her at his hands; she fascinates and seduces Wenceslas, from whom alone she extracts nothing save his honour and the happiness of his young wife, thereby ministering to Bette's infernal revenge. The contrast, the mutual attractions of this pair of utterly unconscientious women, are admirably drawn. Selfish interest on the part of each is what brings them together; but no sooner are their interests harmonised than they really love each other, with that passion of woman for woman which, as Balzac says, is the strongest of all passions.

Beyond the scenes of pure comedy there is little enough to relieve this terrible story. A few touches of natural generosity do indeed cast an occasional ray of light across the darkness. Josépha, the Jewish *cantatrice*, who has thrown over Crevel and Hulot in turn, and is living in splendour under the protection of the duke d'Hérouville, is softened when the degraded and ruined baron comes meanly to beg for her assistance; she is fairly melted when Adeline herself appeals to her generosity, and humbly abases herself to the dust before the martyr of virtue and innocence. The scene in which she bursts out into a rhapsody of meretricious triumph at the recital of her old lover's absolute and irremediable ruin is as fine as anything in the novel.

"She made Hulot sit down in the splendid drawing-room where he had last seen her.

"'Is it true, old man,' she resumed, 'that you have killed your brother and your uncle, ruined your family, mortgaged the house of your children, and spent with your princess the money belonging to the government of Algeria'?

"The baron sadly bent his head.

"'Well! I am delighted by that!' cried Josépha, who rose full of enthusiasm. 'It is a general conflagration! 'Tis Sardanapalus! 'tis grand! 'tis thorough! One is a blackguard, but one has a heart. Well! I like a locust, impassioned for women like you, better than those cold, soulless money-dealers who are called virtuous, and who ruin tens of thousands of families with their ways and means, which are gold for themselves and iron for their dupes! You have only ruined your own people; you have only sold yourself; but you have an excuse, both physical and moral.' . . .

"And she struck a tragic attitude, and said:

"'"Tis Venus bound completely to her prey.'[1]

'There!' she added, frisking round.

"Hulot found himself absolved by vice; vice smiled upon him amidst her lavish luxury. The magnitude of crime was here, as it is for juries, an extenuating circumstance."

The vivacity of Balzac's genius is no less conspicuous than its gravity; his narratives weigh upon us by the intensity of their power, but they sparkle throughout with gems of thought. The great Pantagruelist of modern days, second in vigour to Rabelais alone, is, as the name implies, a philosopher in *petto*, never deeper than when his thoughts seem to be on the surface, never better worth studying than when he lets fall a casual observation in the midst of an unimportant description. The serious, the light, the didactic and the *narquois*, turn up side by side on almost every page; we must be ever on the alert if we would not miss the pith of twenty paragraphs in a single phrase. Let us give a few examples. Is the painter transferring to his canvas the first look of admiration be-

[1] This is a quotation from Racine's *Phèdre*.

stowed by Hulot upon Valérie; he adds: "It is like a flower the perfume of which all Parisian ladies breathe with delight when they find it in their path. There are women devoted to their duty, virtuous and pretty, who return to their homes rather dull, if they have not made up their little nosegay (of admiration) during their walk." Would the author have his fling against the corruption of manners in modern France; he talks of "the new fangled scruples, whereby the poor weak woman ends by being considered as the victim of her lover's desires, as a sister of charity, dressing wounds like a devoted angel. This new art of love makes a vast medley of gospel words for devils' uses." Is he describing the vengeance of Cousin Bette through the machinations of her friend Valérie; he observes "that the joys of satisfied hate are the most ardent, the strongest that the heart knows. Love is as it were the gold, hate the iron of that mine of feelings which is within us." Would he lift his reader above the commonplace interpretation of the crimes and follies which he is depicting; he says: "In Paris life is too busy for vicious men to do wrong by instinct; they simply use vice to ward off aggressions." Would he describe a politician, like Claude Vignon; he says: "The politician of 1840 replaces somewhat the *abbé* of the eighteenth century." Listen to the philosophy of "the protected:" "Life is a garment; when it is dirty we brush it! when it is torn we mend it; but we keep ourselves clothed as long as we can." Or again, to the shrewd observation on the purifying effect of trouble on a worthy mind: "In the great storms of life we imitate the captains who, in tempests, lighten the ship of its heaviest cargo. The lawyer lost his pride of heart, his external assurance, his orator's arrogance, his political self-assumption . . . and he judged life after a wholesome fashion, perceiving that the universal law compels us to be satisfied in everything with approximations." Such sentences as these are sprinkled over the pages of Balzac;

and they would make, if collected from all his works, a volume of thoughts and sayings as shrewd as they would be interesting.

The aim and effect of Balzac's writings are essentially moral; and this I maintain in spite of the fact that the majority of them are such as public opinion in England would never allow to be circulated here. Let us take the most crucial test afforded in the *Cousine Bette*—the bearing of the good characters in contrast with that of the bad ones. It is a fact that, of all the leading personages represented in this story as being generally beyond reproach, and as the victims of the crimes of those whom they love, there is but one—Marshal Hulot—who does not commit a very heinous crime. Hortense, in her youth, takes advantage of Bette's confidence to destroy her happiness; Hulot's son virtually connives at the murder of Valérie; Fischer, the uncle of Adeline, swindles the government in Algeria in order to provide the baron with funds; whilst Adeline, with the idea of rescuing her husband from dishonour, offers herself to Crevel, and is rejected by him as scornfully as, a few years before, he had been rejected by her. This horrible triumph of evil over good does not, in any single instance, lead us to conclude that evil must necessarily triumph, or that goodness is impotent before the attacks of evil; on the contrary, it serves to strengthen and intensify our horror of all the glittering seductions of vice, whose successes pale in beauty and attractiveness before the very relapses of virtue. We rise from the perusal of a book like *Cousine Bette* as from that of an impressive sermon.

> "Vice is a creature of such frightful mien,
> That, to be hated, needs but to be seen;"

and Balzac shows us vice in all its nakedness and hideousness, if also in all its splendour.

M. Taine, in a well-known comparison between the characters of Valérie Marneffe, and Thackeray's Becky Sharpe, has said :—[1]

"Balzac loves his Valérie; this is why he explains and magnifies her. He does not labour to make her odious, but intelligible. He gives her the education of a prostitute, a 'husband as depraved as a prisonful of galley-slaves,' luxurious habits, recklessness, prodigality, womanly nerves, a pretty woman's dislikes, an artist's rapture. Thus born and bred, her corruption is natural. . . She is perfect of her kind. Balzac delights to paint her only for the sake of his own picture. He dresses her, lays on for her her patches, arranges her garments, trembles before her dancing-girl's motions. He details her gestures with as much pleasure as if he were a waiting-woman. His artistic curiosity is fed on the least trait of character and manners. After a violent scene he pauses at a spare moment, and shows her idle, stretched on her couch like a cat, yawning and basking in the sun. Like a physiologist, he knows that the nerves of the beast of prey are softened, and that it only ceases to bound in order to sleep. But what bounds! she dazzles, fascinates; she defends herself successively against three proved accusations, refutes evidence, alternately humiliates and glorifies herself, rails, adores, demonstrates, changing a score of times her voice, her ideas, tricks, and all this in one quarter of an hour. . . Danger roused and inspired her, and her excited nerves propel genius and courage to her brain. To complete the picture of this impetuous nature, superior and unstable, Balzac at the last moment makes her repent. To proportion her fortune to her vice, he leads her triumphantly through the ruin, death, or despair of twenty people, and shatters her in the supreme moment by a fall as terrible as her success."

No doubt Balzac's work is artistic in the highest sense; but his moral tendency, which I have mentioned before,

[1] See the author's translation of Taine's *History of English Literature*, ed. 1874, vol. iv. p. 209.

seems by no means involuntary. It has been, perhaps, too much the fashion of Englishmen to descant upon the immorality of French art, and too much the habit of Frenchmen to speak of the absence of moral aim from art as a virtue, and to boast of it as a specialty. Undoubtedly the conceptions of the two nations are very different on this subject, and the limits imposed upon art in England are narrower than they are in France. As I have already stated, the reason is to be found in the differences of race, climate, national characteristics and antecedents.

It is of course obvious that the limits of this book prevent us from giving a detailed analysis of every one of Balzac's novels, or discussing their merits or demerits in detail. But who can ever forget Victorien d'Esgrignon and his acquaintances, de Marsay, Maxime de Trailles, des Lupeaulx, Rastignac, Vandenesse, Adjuda-Pinto; the duchesses de Grandlieu, de Carigliano, de Chaulieu; the marquises d'Espard, d'Aiglemont, de Listomère; the Countess de Sérizy, Madame Firmiani, and many more, who appear again and again in his novels, who become realities to us, as they were to Balzac, with whose inner life and peculiarities we are perfectly acquainted? Who does not like to study the details of some episodes in the career of Talleyrand, Fouché, Siéyès, Carnot, Malin, the well-known spies Corentin and Peyrade, the rich banker Nucingen, with his German accent, du Tillet; and the doings of such journalists as Finot, Blondet, Nathan, Lousteau, de Rubempré, and many others? or to learn something of the lives of artists like Joseph Bridau, Schinner, de Somervieux, or of scoundrels like Philippe Bridau, drawn from the life as a painful likeness of an old *sabreur*, whose occupation as a man-killer being gone, seeks for amusement at any price. Our author's peasants are photographically delineated; his tradesmen are painfully minute; his doctors, his lawyers, his priests, stand out from the canvas; his mystics and idealists

are so truly described that they nearly send one to sleep, unless one is in the mood to study such abstruse characters; his fantastic heroes, such as Vautrin and Ferragus, and his "Association of the Thirteen," are so exaggerated and impossible that they amuse us by their very impossibility. In his descriptions of dwellings, such as the boarding-house of Madame Vauquer, the house of the *Chat qui pelotte;* in his picture of rooms, their furniture and belongings; and even in the portraiture of the faces of his heroes and heroines, Balzac employs all the finished strokes of a miniature painter, and considers that his readers ought to feel the same interest in his sketches and personages that he himself has in them. He had also a strange belief in Mr. Shandy's theory that a man's name influences his character, and dwells on this subject repeatedly and lovingly.

An English critic[1] says of Balzac's novels :—

"The great majority of them, including the most powerful examples, may be described as variations on a single theme. Each of them is in fact the record of a martyrdom. There is always a virtuous hero or heroine who is tortured, and most frequently tortured to death, by a combination of selfish intrigues . . . indeed, in one way or other, as subordinate character or as heroine, this figure of a graceful feminine victim comes into nearly every novel. Virtuous heroes fare little better . . . the old-fashioned canons of poetical justice are inverted; and the villains are dismissed to live very happily ever afterwards, whilst the virtuous are slain outright, or sentenced to a death by slow torture. . . Balzac's best women give us the impression that they are courtesans acting the character of virgins, and showing admirable dramatic skill in the performance . . . the ladies who in his pages have broken loose from all social restraints, differ only in external circumstances from their more correct sisters."

[1] See in Leslie Stephen's, *Hours in a Library*, an admirable essay on Balzac's novels.

There is a great deal of truth in these remarks, but the whole question seems to be whether Balzac describes society as it is, or rather as he imagined it to be. That he drew it as a pessimist cannot be doubted, but he was, as we have already said, a vivisector, and nothing but that. And as there are many writers who always look upon everything that goes on in this world with rose-coloured spectacles, and consider every man and woman as models of virtue and chastity, it may perhaps be as well if now and then an eminent novelist arises who paints life in less bright tints; and even if artistically this may not be so enchanting, still socially it may be true, and truth is better than art. Such works may not be fit for boarding-schools, but I imagine they will always be interesting to the student of certain phases—even if imaginary phases — of society. Another objection against Balzac, that he loved to describe horrors and sufferings, above all of women, seems to me not quite just. Our author describes and analyses whatever character, situation, or home he intends to bring before us, but shows no predilection for one part of his subject more than for another. His popularity in France will probably never be less than it is at the present moment; in England it will probably never be more.

§ 3. The Theatre under Louis Philippe.[1]

If the social life of France, as it existed in the third to the fifth decades of the nineteenth century, is portrayed for us by the fiction of the past generation, its social history, the records of its domestic and general progress, may be found revealed,

[1] This chapter is chiefly a *resumé* of Muret, *Histoire de France par le Théâtre*, vol. iii. *Règne de Louis Philippe.*

or at least illustrated, in the dramatic literature of the same period. During the great Revolution we have seen the drama playing a by no means unimportant part in the encouragement or the modification of popular passions; and in the epochs succeeding the restoration of monarchy we find the influence of the drama continually asserting itself—continually tending to fulfil its inalienable duty of instructing its audiences, and continually—it must be confessed—availing itself of a greater license and laxity in illustrating the manners of the age than its sister art of fiction. Nevertheless the dramatic art of the Restoration had in the first instance something better to do than to truckle to the less elevated instincts of the Parisian public. Its subjects were largely taken from the recent national history; and that, of course, because public opinion demanded and approved this historical complexion of the drama. The titles of a hundred plays, composed during the second quarter of the century, bear witness to the absorbing interest with which France was ever ready to contemplate herself as she was exhibited to the world during the memorable five-and-twenty years of Revolution and Empire. Not only self-contemplation, but to a large degree self-education, was the object of most of those who wrote, acted, or listened to such historical dramas as those which flourished in the days of M. J. Chénier and his younger successors. Some of these I have mentioned in an earlier chapter. Others, yet more pronounced in their political tone and historical circumstance, followed upon the Revolution of 1830, of which I need only instance the remarkable *Charlotte Corday* of Régnier-Destourbet, and *Camille Desmoulins* of Mallian and Blanchard. The French drama, in fact, threw itself with enthusiasm into the stream of liberal thought which burst its dykes in the Revolution of July, which flowed with increasing volume and comparatively insignificant checks during the first three or four years of the

reign of Louis Philippe, and which is as strongly reflected in the general literature of the period as any other epoch of French history.

The *Nouveautés* theatre, which occupied a site on the Place de la Bourse, was the first of the Parisian theatres which ventured to celebrate the second Revolution. July was past; and on the 2d of August, the very day on which Charles X. renounced the crown on behalf of himself and the dauphin, the Nouveautés produced a *Patriotic à-Propos,* the work of Villeneuve and Masson; which, representing as it did a scene of the 29th of July, was either a brilliant improvisation or an adaptation of materials already at hand. The stage was represented as filled with combatants surging backwards and forwards, or carried wounded from the streets; musketry deafened the audience between the speeches of the characters; the troops were satisfactorily routed by the victorious mob. The latter forces its way into the Tuileries, and a mason, Gâcheux,[1] takes his seat upon the throne. "Is it comfortable?" asks one of the populace. "Ah," replies the mason, "if you knew how one sinks into it. If a man does not stay here, when he is once in, he must be a ninny!" The allusions of the piece are of course numerous. Here is one in honour of the Polytechnic School, the students whereof had led the volunteer columns during the July-days:—[2]

> "Let us do honour to that noble school
> Whence these high-minded boys have issued forth.
> The veterans of Fleurus and Arcole
> Could not have been more chivalrous than they.
> O hope of science, our deliverers,
> Where'er throughout the world ye speed your way

[1] *Gâcheur* is the French for a hodman, and *gâcheux* means splashy, muddy.

[2] One of these, Vanneau, killed in one of the conflicts, gave his name to a new street leading out of the Faubourg Saint-Germains—the Rue Vanneau—in which Balzac located the hôtel of his Valérie Marneffe.

'Hats off! hats off!' should be the grateful cry;
'All praise and honour to the sons of France!'"[1]

For years to come a play was barely acceptable to the populace unless one or more of its characters was dressed in the uniform of the Polytechnic School, or in that of the revived National Guard.

The affection with which Paris now began to cherish her most liberal traditions was displayed clearly enough through the stage. From the beginning of the century the city of revolutions had hardly been able to express any of the sympathy with which she looked back to the more patriotic of her sons who had earned fame and gratitude under the first Republic. Now, the *Marseillaise*, amongst other sacred relics of the past, renewed its sway over the imagination of the populace. With the middle classes it had rarely been a favourite; but to the people it was a hymn of liberty and of triumph. It was the new king himself who, from the balcony of his palace, in response to the vigorous summons of an excited crowd, humoured his subjects by repeating this significant symbol of their supremacy. The Revolution of July had, moreover, a song of its own, the *Parisienne*, composed by Casimir Delavigne, and set to music by Auber. It was adopted as a national air—for Delavigne was a special *protégé* of Louis Philippe; and Adolphe Nourrit sang it at the Opera in the uniform of a National Guard.

The *Patriotic à-Propos* was soon succeeded by a shoal of

[1] "Saluons cette illustre école
D'où sont sortis ces enfants généreux.
Les vieux soldats de Fleurus et d'Arcole
Ne pouvaient pas être plus braves qu'eux.
Vous, nos sauveurs, l'espoir de la science,
Partout où vous portez vos pas,
On doit crier: chapeaux bas! chapeaux bas!
Honneur aux enfants de la France!"

similar plays, one of the most favoured being *The 27th, 28th, and 29th of July*, the joint work of Etienne Arago, then *directeur* of the Vaudeville, and Duvert. The conception of this piece is realistic enough, as the opening scene will testify. An Englishman, driving in Paris, is overtaken by the Revolution; his carriage is turned upside-down in the service of a hastily-improvised barricade; and taking the thing in good part, he throws himself into the fray, making common cause with the mob. The scene is based on an alleged incident of a sufficiently striking character. On the 29th of July 1830, whilst the streets were filled with an excited crowd, a patrol of eighteen soldiers, commanded by a lieutenant, was slowly forcing its way along the street Saint-Honoré, when an Englishman named Fox [1] fired upon them from a window of the Hôtel Royal, and thus shed the first blood of the Revolution. The patrol returned his fire, and killed both him and two of the servants of the hotel. In the mouth of the stage Englishman the authors of the piece put this stirring allusion to the sporting tastes of Charles X.—

"Each hour that in the wood your monarch spends
Is an hour wasted of your happiness.
This prince has too much liking for the chase;
But, as for me, I love not sporting kings.
Their passion turns the human heart to stone.
For see whereto this cold indifference
In shedding blood conducts the monarch's heart.
If his first sport is the defenceless game,
His last will be the people that he rules." [2]

[1] A nephew of Charles James Fox; or, as others say, an American named Foulkes. This appears to be only a tradition.

[2] "Dans les bois tout le temps qu'il passe
Est perdu pour votre bonheur.
Ce prince, il aime trop la chasse;
Je n'aime pas un roi chasseur,
Cet exercice endurcit trop le coeur.
Verser le sang avec indifférence,
Vous voyez où cela conduit.
C'est par le gibier qu'on commence,
C'est par le peuple qu'on finit."

The Gentleman in Waiting was another well-favoured political play, full of allusions and reminiscences, which combined the democratic idea with the Napoleonic skilfully enough to meet with a very fair reception from its audiences. *André the Singer*, by Fontan, who had been imprisoned under the former Government for a political newspaper article, *Le Mouton enragé*, had a considerable success during the same phase of the public taste; although it, in common with other works of the same author, *Mad Jeanne* and the *Voyage of Liberty*, elevated personal caricature above the claims of dramatic art, and encouraged a taste for stage-libel which was, happily, not destined long to hold its own with the public. *The Men of To-morrow*, *The Place-market* (*La Foire aux Places*), *The Woman's League*, and *The Sluggard King*, a tragedy by Ancelot,[1] were the most noted of the remaining plays which, in the year succeeding the Revolution of July, appealed to the uppermost dramatic predilections of the people.

Another phase of the public taste was appealed to in a number of plays directed against the priests and Jesuits. Some of these were simply reproductions from the repertory of the eighteenth century; others were new, like the *Contre-Lettre*, the *Jesuit*, and similar plays. Most of them were scandalous, in a higher or lower degree; some were even blasphemous, as indicated by such titles as *Napoleon in Paradise*, the *Son of Man*, and the like. Few deserve that the names of their authors should be coupled with them. Napoleon himself came in for a fair share of the attention of the dramatists. Alexandre Dumas, to avenge a slight put upon him by Louis Philippe and his ministers, wrote a drama on the Emperor, the title-rôle of which was created by Frederic Lemaître, then fast rising to the zenith of his fame. The play itself is not Dumas' best; and it is chiefly notable for

[1] 1794-1854.

the circumstances under which it was written, and for the somewhat ridiculous letter addressed by its author to the King.[1] Dumas, upon the recommendation of General Foy, had received an appointment as clerk in the secretary's office of the Duke of Orléans; but when his *Henry III.* had attracted upon him the attention of the Court, he was made joint-librarian of the Palais-Royal. It was this comfortable sinecure which he thus grandiloquently resigned.

Napoleon was not Alexandre Dumas' first dramatic manifestation. He was already a well-known figure on the Parisian stage when it was performed. We have seen Dumas at work as a novelist; we have analysed the perfect architecture of his romance, if such an expression is permissible; as a dramatist, Alexandre Dumas possessed this gift of invention even to a higher degree. "If Victor Hugo could build plays as well as I, and if I could write as noble verses as Victor Hugo, what splendid pieces we should write," he said, speaking of himself with that characteristic candour which readers are so amused at in his *Travelling Impressions.* An author usually

[1] The letter is curious. "February 11th, 1831. Sire—About three weeks ago I had the honour to ask your Majesty for another interview. I intended to offer my resignation by word of mouth; for I wished to explain to his Majesty how, in doing this, I was neither ungrateful nor capricious.

"Sire, it is long since I wrote and printed that, with me, the man of letters was but the preface of the man of politics.

"The age at which I shall be able to become one of the members of a reformed Chamber is approaching for me.

"I am almost certain, on the day when I attain the age of thirty, to be named deputy: I am twenty-eight, sire.

"Unfortunately the people, who see from below and afar, do not distinguish between the intentions of the king and the acts of ministers.

"Now the acts of the ministers are arbitrary and fatal to liberty.

"Amongst the men who live upon your Majesty, and who daily tell him that they admire and love him, there is perhaps not one who loves you more than I do; only they say it and do not think it, whilst I do not say it, and I think it.

"But, sire, devotion to principles is above devotion to men. Devotion to principles makes La Fayettes; devotion to men makes Rovigos.

"I pray your Majesty to accept my resignation."

is not to be trusted as a self-critic; but in this little piece of braggadocio he was not far from the truth. His plays were always constructed with a masterly knowledge of the requirements of the stage. One is born a poet, a musician, an artist; one is also born a dramatist; if Alexandre Dumas lacked the æsthetic refinement and moral elevation of a dramatist of the highest order, he was born a playwright, and as such he was the first of his time. He admirably understood the effects, the *ficelles* as the French say, of dramatic performances; he knew to a nicety what should and should not be said before the footlights; he knew that a personage must not be too glib, under pain of begetting displeasure on the part of the public; that action is what seduces the majority of spectators, and that a play which has action and varied movement is always certain to please, whereas one of high merit with regard to psychological study and the depicture of character will produce but a faint impression unless the dish be spiced with those condiments which appeal to the more vulgar feelings of audiences. The result was that Dumas almost invariably pleased and succeeded on a first hearing, although he was afterwards more or less roughly treated at the hands of his journalistic critics. His plays were certainly more "romantic," in the sense that was then attached to that expression, than those of Victor Hugo; nevertheless they met with no opposition worth mentioning, whilst Hugo's gave rise to downright battles between the sectarians of two schools of literature which vied for supremacy. Alexandre Dumas was veritably the spoilt child of the public. His first drama was *Christine;* but it was performed several years after it had been written, and immediately after a play on the same subject by Frederic Soulié which had failed. He first appeared publicly as an author in *Henry III. and his Court*, a piece composed in defiance of classical tenets and conventions. It was performed at the Théâtre Français in

1828, and secured such unprecedented success that Racine (it is the author himself who is again our informant) was hooted and consigned to the theatrical lumber-room. This success, when we consider that *Henri III.* was the weakest of Dumas' dramatic productions, could hardly be explained were it not borne in mind that the public was sick of the Greeks and Romans who continually expressed the same things in the same terms, in the same situations, and the same costumes. In *Henri III.* they emerged from the Racinian monotony into a new play which, however uncouth, contained local colouring, new situations, and new ideas. *Christine,* in verse, was performed two years later with equal success. In 1831 the Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin gave the play in which Alexandre Dumas may be said to have shown all his qualities and defects, *Antony.* The object of the play is in itself objectionable, and it is objectionably treated; but in point of interest and construction it is hardly equalled by any contemporary drama. *The Tower of Nesle* of which the paternity gave rise to a duel between Alexandre Dumas and M. Gaillardet, was another notable production of the same class. There is not much in *Kean, The Widow's Husband,* and *Angèle,* performed from 1832 to 1836, save the never-varying qualities of construction I have spoken of; but *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* and *A Marriage under Louis XIV.,* his last plays, are delightfully witty and lively comedies, which, to our taste, are the most valuable portion of Dumas' dramatic baggage. He ceased to write for the stage after 1841; and the theatre lost in him one of its most active and vivacious exponents. Although his art was far from high, it was, as Victor Hugo's in another sphere, the abstract expression of the theories which for ever altered the form and the spirit of French drama.

De Vigny brought also upon the stage, in 1829, a translation of Shakspeare's *Othello,* which met with but little success; his *Maréchale d'Ancre,* played two years later, was

also a failure, but *Chatterton*, performed in the beginning of 1835, took the town by storm, and was repeatedly performed.

Amongst the plays specially commemorating the most troubled period of the French Revolution, *Charlotte Corday*, which I have already mentioned, fell almost dead, whilst *Camille Desmoulins, or Parties in* 1794, had not much more success. The character-rôle was but an idealised Desmoulins; or, at all events, it took the Dantonist at his best, and shirked the passages of his life which tell most to his discredit. The part of Lucile, his wife, is more true to fact, and represents fairly well the interesting and unfortunate woman who did so much to soften the asperities of her eccentric husband. The Robespierre of this drama is a fine creation, though, I fear, little more historically accurate than Desmoulins. The following soliloquy is in its way admirable :—

"Let us look at this diplomatic message; they tell me it is important . . . so much the better; it will divert the stormy thoughts which trouble me. (*He breaks the seal and reads.*) Ah! from London! . . . The French princes! . . . They offer me gold! Do they not know that I despise it? They have no conception of that fine title of republican; they think that every man may be corrupted. . . . High rank! Am I not in the highest! But how much it costs me! . . . There's a conspiracy afoot, I am certain. . . . That Dillon! . . . Did Camille wish to reveal it? . . . It was the only way to save himself.

"I see it now. . . . I shall have no rest but in the tomb. . . . Rest! who knows of that? It may be calumny will insult my ashes. . . . O posterity! thou alone canst judge me. Yes, thou wilt say that my design was grand, for if I fall the Revolution will survive me. It will be accomplished. But what force must not one have there (*he lays his hand on his forehead*) to advance to the goal! For ever to oppose the monotony of the scaffold to the ever-renewed furies of civil war! . . . The miserable ones! they envy my power. Ah! what am I? . . . a slave

of the country, a living martyr of the republic, the victim and the scourge of crime. It is enough to know me to be calumniated; other men have their crimes forgiven; in me they make my zeal for the country a crime. Rob me of my conscience, and I shall be the most miserable of men.

"They call me tyrant! . . . If I were, they would crawl at my feet; I should choke them with gold, I should give them the right to commit every kind of crime, and they would be grateful! If I were, the kings we have vanquished, far from denouncing me, would extend to me their dishonest support; I should be treating with them. What do they look for in their distress, if it is not the succour of a faction protected by them, which sells to them the glory of our country?

"Day by day I say in the Convention, but in vain: 'If we lose hold of the reins of the Revolution, you will see a military despotism seize them, and the leader of the factions overthrow the despised national representatives.'

"People, remember that if, in the republic, Justice does not rule with absolute sway, and if his word does not mean the love of equality and of country, liberty is an idle word! People, thou that art feared, that art flattered, and despised, thou, an acknowledged sovereign, treated ever like a slave, remember that, wherever justice reigns not, the passions of magistrates do, and the people has changed its fetters, not its fate. O people! know that every friend of liberty will always be placed between a duty and a calumny; that those who cannot be accused of having betrayed will be accused of ambition; that thy confidence and thy esteem will be titles to prescription for all thy friends; that the cries of oppressed patriotism will be called cries of sedition; and that, not daring to attack thee in the mass, they will proscribe individually all good citizens."

Noble words! but rather strange in the mouth of Robespierre. Another play, called *Robespierre*, took a more just view of the character of the Terrorist, assisted thereto by the concentration of the interest on his victims — on André Chenier, Roucher, and others of the guillotined. No sketch, however brief, of the theatre under Louis Philippe, could be

written without the mention of a comedy in which Frederick Lemaître made his most successful creation in the character of Robert Macaire. It was indeed in 1823, in the *Auberge des Adrets*, that this pleasant swindler first made his appearance. The piece was written as a melodrama, and the author had no idea of representing Macaire in a comic light; but Lemaître audaciously turned his rôle into a travesty, and produced the quaint cut-throat, dressed in ragged splendour, full of grotesque humour and dry philosophy, who has since become one of the best recognised types of the human species. So popular did the character of Robert Macaire become, that in 1834 a play was produced, which was named after the hero, now become a respectable financier—more after the style of 1877, one would think, than of 1834—married to the daughter of the Baron de Wormspire, whom the dutiful son-in-law cheats at cards as gracefully as he swindles the simple M. Gogo and his brother speculators. At the close of the piece Macaire's old enemies, the gendarmes, are on his track again; and he eludes both them and his victims by the very burlesque *dénouement* of a sudden ascent in a balloon; laughing over the side, in his assumption to the skies, as he had laughed in his sleeves while yet a dweller on *terra firma*.

The Trial of a Marshal of France, produced at the Nouveautés in 1831—a four-act historical piece, recalling one of the most stirring and painful events of 1815, the condemnation of Ney, but without any great merit—gave rise to considerable agitation amongst the public, and was honoured by an interdict from the Government. Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'Amuse*, the plot whereof we shall give farther on, shared the same fate at the end of 1832; not, of course, without the most vigorous protests on the part of its author, and the most impatient disapproval of the public. The authorities, who had doubtless begun to experience the awkwardness of granting complete liberty of expression under a monarchy which

was only constitutional in name and as an experiment, had in fact begun to draw the reins tighter and tighter against the strong head of an impetuous nation. Casimir Delavigne's *Children of Edward*,[1] brought out with much success in May 1833, was too full of significant liberal allusions, and too eagerly understood and applauded by the public, to be tolerated by those who had suppressed the *Trial of a Marshal of France;* and it also fell under the ban of the Government. Here, as on other occasions, Louis-Philippe was far in advance of his advisers. He had committed himself, on the first night of the performance of the *Children of Edward*, by a warm letter of congratulation to the author. Delavigne replied in a dignified letter,—far more dignified than that of the king,—declining the compliments of a sovereign, as such, upon a play in which he had intended to cast discredit on the usurpation of national liberty and popular supremacy. "I think," he said to the king, "and the public is of my opinion, that there is no reconciliation possible between the incontestable usurpation which I attack in my tragedy, and a revolution in which I pride myself in having taken part, which was made by the immense majority of Frenchmen, in the name of law." It is altogether one of the most remarkable episodes of the rivalry of popular and monarchical sovereignty which history has to record. It was not long before the censure was definitely re-established, on September 9th, 1835. The minister who carried this measure into effect was M. Thiers; the last play suppressed before the passing of the Act was *Angó*, one of Félix Pyat's.[2] From this time forward the drama in France again languished, until the revolution of 1848 once more removed its fetters.

Amongst other dramatists who signalised themselves by their fervency in carrying out the new dictates of Romanticism in the drama, may be mentioned Frederic Soulié,

[1] Edward III. of England. [2] 1810.

Bouchardy,[1] and Félix Pyat. Soulié wrote some plays of merit, but he was, on the whole, vastly inferior to most of those who furnished the stage during the eventful period which closed in 1848. Bouchardy, the author of *The Bell-ringer of St. Paul*, was a melodramatist of considerable invention, but his compositions were somewhat morbid, and too much flavoured with assize court horrors. He was a species of superior Xavier de Montépin. It should be mentioned here that just as the development of new literary theories had attained its zenith, a young man of Racinian genius successfully strove to cater favour for the classical tragedy of the seventeenth century by producing a play composed according to the old precepts. *Lucrèce* was performed at the Odéon in 1843, and the Parisian public, ever disposed to render justice to talent under whatever shape it shows itself, flocked to applaud Ponsard.[2] All the promises held out by *Lucrèce*, however, were not entirely fulfilled in subsequent plays; nevertheless Ponsard deserves to be mentioned as one of the distinguished contributors to the drama of his period, although, properly speaking, he was not in form and feeling a Romanticist.

I have reserved Victor Hugo's dramas for final examination, because all the other playwrights whose works I have noted in this chapter, not excepting Alexandre Dumas, were the satellites of this brilliant star. It was Victor Hugo who laid down the rules of the new school, and he maintained his title to be supreme leader of the brilliant host that followed in his wake. Victor Hugo expressed his dramatic views in the preface of his drama of *Cromwell* (which, by the by, was not intended to be performed); they were to the effect that the stage was, above all, a reflex of society, a mirror in which the public should see its image and the legitimate depiction of its vices and virtues. Tragedy, he contended, was only

[1] 1810-1870. [2] 1814-1867.

one of the three sides of the dramatic synthesis such as Shakspeare had magnificently illustrated it. The drama should comprise not only tragedy, that is the rendering of passion, but comedy, the delineation of character. It should be permissible to laugh as well as to cry on the stage, and the dramatist should not be tied down by conventionalists who had trammelled the great Corneille and clipped the wings of his genius. Shortly after, he attempted to carry out these wholesome principles in *Hernani*, the first of his dramas that was performed. The classical school fought hard against the play; but the partisans of Hugo, under the leadership of Theophile Gautier, fought harder, and success remained in their hands. After this came, in more or less rapid succession, *Marion de Lorme*, *Le Roi s'Amuse* (both in verse, as well as *Hernani*), *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Angelo*, and *Marie Tudor*, in prose; and finally *Les Burgraves* and *Ruy Blas* (verse). This last drama was so sharply criticised by the press that Victor Hugo resolved to give up stage writing. Some pretend that it would have been better for his glory if he had done this before; but the majority have wisely thought otherwise.

Cromwell was written in 1827, when Victor Hugo was barely twenty-five years old. It extends over nearly six hundred pages, and is far from having the symmetry, the æsthetic perfection of a masterpiece; the very fact that its extent prevents its performance summarily decrees its imperfection; but it contains numerous fine verses, a goodly number of highly dramatic situations, and a not wholly indefensible description of Cromwell's character. I do not think, besides, that Victor Hugo intended the first dramatic instalment to be more than a rough exposition of the main characteristics of the romantic drama. *Hernani* is a great improvement on *Cromwell;* it has remained one of the popular plays of the Théâtre-Français. However, in spite of the magnificent monologue of Charles V., the rich and resonant verses, and

the vigorous treatment of the subject, *Hernani* is comparatively inferior. Perhaps that one of our poet's dramas which may be said to have approximated most nearly to perfection is *Marion de Lorme*, albeit that the predominating idea of this play has been declared repulsive. With this I cannot agree. Victor Hugo chooses for a heroine a creature who, although fair in body, is corrupt of soul; but does this with the purpose of showing that she can be purified by a healthy and vigorous passion. Marion is in a certain sphere what Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre-Dame, is in another. Of course the acceptance of so delicate a thesis by the public depends very much upon the manner in which it is treated. The poet surmounts the difficulty with great skill. The character of Marion, so difficult to render, and above all to make appear interesting and sympathetic, is traced with a wonderful delicacy of touch and a great depth of feeling. The construction of the play offers none of those unworthy tricks which are not unreasonably complained of in Victor Hugo, and which consist chiefly in entering by windows when the door may be safely used, or concealing people in cupboards when they cannot be got rid of in a more feasible way. Next in order of merit may be mentioned *Le Roi s'Amuse*. This play was peculiarly unfortunate. Ill received on the first night of its performance, it was prohibited on the second by the Government. The reason of this official severity was a poor one; it was said that two verses uttered by Triboulet, the strange figure which forms the centre of the drama, alluded to the *bourgeois* king. Nothing could have been more untrue. As to the hostility of the audience, it was more difficult to account for, since *Marie Tudor* and *Lucrezia Borgia*, vastly inferior to *Le Roi s'Amuse*, enjoyed a fair run of success. In the latter play we find the poet again striving to expound a philosophic idea. Triboulet, the jester, is despised by his fellow-men on account of his deformities; urged by malice

and revenge, he incites King Francis the First to commit evil. But the jester has a daughter ; and he is himself the sufferer of the wickedness which by a piece of retributive justice, he has counselled his master to do. Francis seduces his child, and then when Triboulet hires a ruffian to murder the ravisher, it is his daughter who, by a fatal mistake, falls in the ambush prepared for the guilty one. Curiously enough, although it is remarkable for great lyric beauties, and contains situations as dramatic as they are natural, the public has never had an opportunity of reversing the judgment passed upon this drama.

Of the other dramas of Victor Hugo, *Ruy Blas* and *Les Burgraves*, although below *Marion de Lorme* and *Le Roi s'Amuse*, are amongst the most heart-stirring creations of the modern stage. In Victor Hugo the dramatist is not spotless ; far from it. But of all playwrights of his time he is the one who soared the highest ; and if the lyric poet transcends the dramatist, the latter's productions nevertheless deserve to be classed amongst those of master minds.

§ 4. The Epilogue.

We have reached the end of our survey of French Literature, which cannot on the present occasion be extended beyond the reign of Louis Philippe. It is true that here, within thirty years of our own time, we seem to stand face to face with a new group of causes, motives, and principles, out of which a whole harvest of literary fertility was already springing, from which a distinct literary epoch had already taken its rise. The literary history of France in the nineteenth century is a history of intellectual hardihood on the one hand, and of moderation and repression on the other : of

resolute assertion and re-assertion, opposed step by step by an equally resolute attempt to bridle the free expression of thought. The outburst of license in 1830, and the re-imposition of the censure in 1835, are typical events which have been many times repeated during the past hundred years; and the history of these alternate victories, which we leave for the present incomplete, would constitute in itself, perhaps, the most engrossing chapter of literary annals which it is possible to conceive. But, if we must relinquish our survey with this sense of its necessary incompleteness, it is well that we should recall for a moment the principal characteristics and features of the national genius whose productions we have passed under review, and note, whilst the impressions of these productions are still fresh upon the mind, the strength and persistency of the causes which have made French literature what it is. The political and social seeds of action which bore their first fruit in the first Revolution, whose vitality was not exhausted even in the fourth Revolution, and which have given to the written works of the nineteenth century a peculiar flavour and piquancy of their own, were not directly amongst the sources of the national genius which were prominent in our minds when we were considering the works of Villon, of Rabelais, of Corneille, of Molière. But, on the other hand, these sources were in themselves permanent; they had their share in producing a Guizot and a Balzac, as well as a Rabelais and a Molière; and it is to them that we must attribute the endurance of national types which makes the literature of to-day organically identical with the literature of the sixteenth century.

We have, it appears to me, had reason to conclude that the necessary interdependence and inevitable connection between the literature and the history of a country[1] is at

[1] See Introduction, p. 4.

least as strikingly illustrated in the annals of France as in those of any other country; much more strikingly, for instance, than in the case of England. I do not think it could be maintained that the rich ideality and illimitable variety of English literature—of Shakspeare, of Byron, of Swinburne—is so thoroughly reflected and reproduced in the national character, and in the political history, as are the *verve*, elasticity, inconsistency, and love of social equality, which are conspicuous features of men like Rabelais, Voltaire, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, in the character and history of Frenchmen. Nor are the instances so many, or, as a rule, so important in England as in France, in which the mutual reaction of deeds and written words has been so direct and immediate. Probably no country except France could point to such a portentous outcome of the genius of her literary men as the Revolution of 1789, which has thoroughly transformed the national history of France, and which was undoubtedly prepared, predicted, and guided by the pens of a few individuals. And as to the manner of this influence of French literature over French history, has it not been practically the same in every age? Satire has been its prominent feature and its most powerful instrument; the mind of the people has been as acute to comprehend as the mind of the writer has been ready to insinuate all the subtle allusions, the mordant words and phrases, the delicate innuendos and implications which pierce like polished shafts through the outer skin of equable indifference in which a Frenchman is often clothed. Who did more than Rabelais to break down the hypocritical autocracy of ecclesiasticism? Who did more than Molière to disperse the mists of affectation in which the intellect and sense of his countrymen were gradually becoming involved? Who did more than Voltaire to destroy the last strongholds of a corrupt superstition? And was not satire the strongest weapon in the hands of

every one of them? How many other pioneers of civilisation and free thought do we not owe to France, that country to which can justly be applied the line—"Blessed are those among nations who dare to be free for the rest."[1] I might indefinitely multiply instances of the intimate relations existing between French literature and French history; but our survey has been inefficient indeed, our labour has been in vain, and our task is still unperformed, if it has not impressed this truth upon our minds.

[1] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *A Court Lady.*

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